The Antichrist in the Fathers and their Exegetical Basis*

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In this study we shall attempt to establish whether the Fathers had a clearly defined idea concerning the Antichrist – perhaps not only a christology but also an "antichristology" developed during the first centuries AD – and how this related to the texts of the Old Testament and of the New Testament they mentioned most in the discussion. Although much has already been written about our subject, we hope to offer by our systematic treatment a fresh view on as well the Biblical as the Patristic writings, by being a little bit more elaborate than some encyclopedia articles (which seem to be summaries of never written books) and a little bit more systematic than some monographs on the subject. In particular we hope that a chronological presentation of the evidence will demonstrate how the figure of the Antichrist, which is in the Biblical literature shadowy at best, during the patristic period is presented with more definite features.

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I. The Old Testament

The Prophecy of Daniel

The first text we should discuss in this chronological presentation is Dan. 11.21-45.

The book of Daniel presents itself as a compilation of prophecies from the *sixth* century BC. For those who accept the possibility of foretelling prophecy – and undoubtedly the Fathers belonged in this category – this is an acceptable dating. However, Dan. 11 obtains a fuller meaning when placed in the context of *second* century BC history. Readers living in the days of Antiochus IV applied the writings to him and saw in him the Antichrist (although they did not use the word)[1].

As time passed – and a third phase had begun – doubts increased. It remained obvious that the author had had an eschatological perspective. But did he actually write about Antiochus IV? Or was the Antichrist still to come? And if so, where in the text is the point of change? When Antiochus had been dead for a while, and the events foretold in Dan. 12 had not taken place, the readers were forced to conclude that apparently Antiochus IV and the Antichrist were not the same person. At this point in time, the question arose which verses should still be allocated to Antiochus IV and which verses were to be fulfilled at a later date[2].

We will now have a closer look at Dan. 11.21-45 to gain a better understanding of whom the described figure should be identified with. Our attention will go mainly to the third phase, the period in which it was known how Antiochus IV had actually died. In

[1] Cf. A.S. van der Woude, *Prophetic Prediction, Political Prognostication, and Firm Belief. Reflections on Daniel 11:40-12:3*, in: C.A. Evans – S. Talmon (Edd.), *The Quest for Context and Meaning. Studies in Biblical Intertextuality in Honor of James A. Sanders* (Biblical Interpretation Series 28), Leiden 1997, pp. 63-73 (pp. 64, 68). It is possible to distinguish an Antichrist figure in earlier Old Testament passages, but this is the oldest passage in which the Fathers clearly distinguish the Antichrist figure. Cf. G.W. Lorein, *The Antichrist Theme in the Intertestamental Period* (Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha. Sup. ser. 44), London - New York 2003, Chapter 1.

[2] Not to mention any "double fulfilments". Cf. R. Bodenmann, *Naissance d'une Exégèse. Daniel dans l'Eglise ancienne des trois premiers siècles* (Beiträge zur Geschichte der biblischen Exegese 28), Tübingen 1986, pp. 299-300.

so doing we will also sketch the historical background that is important for a clear understanding of this Biblical passage.

After a description of the Persian kings, Alexander the Great and his successors, and the provocation that led to the fight between Ptolemies and Seleucids for the Holy Land, Antiochus appears in v. 21[3]. The word נִבְזֶה appears to imply an ethical judgement from the start, but this is not the case. Comparison with parallel texts makes clear that this term refers to a lack of interest or appreciation[4]. It forms a stark contrast with the surname θεὸς ἐπιφανής adopted by Antiochus IV[5]. The honour of kingship was not granted to him, because he was only the brother of Seleucus IV, who also had two sons. However, he managed to become king of the Seleucid Empire in a devious way[6].

Vv. 22-24 give a triptych of Antiochus' military successes, his unfaithfulness and his rapacity. The "prince of the covenant" is an ecclesiarch: high priest Onias III was murdered in 170[7].

The first phase of the Sixth Syrian war[8] is discussed in vv. 25-28. The king of the South is the under-age Ptolemy VI Philometor,

[3] Jerome sees the Antichrist from this early point onwards. His exegesis can chiefly be explained by his opposition to Porphyry, who saw Antiochus IV everywhere and did not allocate any role to the Antichrist at all.

[4] G.C. AALDERS (†), *Daniël* (Commentaar op het Oude Testament), Kampen 1962, p. 278. Text according to K. ELLIGER – W. RUDOLPH, *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, Stuttgart 1976.

The judgement of POLYBIUS XXVIII 18 (text according to W.R. PATON, *Polybius. The Histories VI* (Loeb Classical Library), London – Cambridge (Mass.) 1927) is completely different: ἦν καὶ πρακτικὸς καὶ μεγαλεπίβολος καὶ τοῦ τῆς βασιλείας προσχήματος ἄξιος ("he was vigorous and had great projects and deserved the honour of kingship").

[5] J.A. MONTGOMERY, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (International Critical Commentary), Edinburgh 1927.

[6] E. WILL, *Histoire politique du monde hellénistique II. Des avènements d'Antiochos III et de Philippe V à la fin des Lagides* (Annales de l'Est; mémoires 32), Nancy 1982², pp. 304-306.

[7] J.T. NELIS, *Daniël* (Boeken van het Oude Testament), Roermond – Maaseik 1954, p. 117; AALDERS, *o.c.* (n. 4), pp. 278-280. Murder of Onias III: A.S. VAN DER WOUDE, *Geschiedenis en godsdienst van het Palestijnse Jodendom vanaf Alexander de Grote tot aan de komst van de Romeinen*, in: ID. (Ed.), *Bijbels Handboek IIB. Tussen Oude en Nieuwe Testament*, Kampen 1983, p. 39; O. PLÖGER, *Das Buch Daniel* (Kommentar zum Alten Testament), Gütersloh 1965, p. 163. To the Jews, a high priest equalled a prince (S.K. EDDY, *The King is Dead. Studies in the Near Eastern Resistance to Hellenism*, Lincoln 1961, p. 208).

[8] In general see WILL, *o.c.* (n. 6), pp. 311-320; O. MØRKHOLM, *Antiochus IV of Syria* (Classica et Mediaevalia. Diss. 8), København 1966, pp. 64-87.

advised by Euleus and Leneus to recover Palestine and Coele Syria. Antiochus IV responded to their attack[9] and gained the advantage. Those who ate from the king's provisions, i.e. his immediate associates, destroyed him. The advice of Euleus and Leneus had been fatal indeed[10]. Was the Egyptian army going to be swept away by the Nile[11]?

In v. 27 the two kings apparently sat at the same table again, but their good relationship was only pretence: they were lying to each other. This is a beautiful oxymoron. Porphyry comments: "qui simulabit pacem cum sororis suae filio, et comedet cum eo panem, et postea occupabit Aegyptum[12]". When Ptolemy VI Philometor fled from Egypt, Antiochus pretended that he would protect Ptolemy VI against his younger brother Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II[13]. Ptolemy VI feigned to accept Antiochus' help. Both Ptolemy and the Seleucid failed, and this is explained theologically in v. 27b: כִּי־עוֹד קֵץ לַמּוֹעֵד. Jansen has an interesting comment on the end of this first phase of the Sixth Syrian War. He says that Antiochus' actions cannot be explained by hubris or by graecomania but only by his desire to be another Alexander the Great. There are certainly many parallels between Alexander the Great and Antiochus IV Epiphanes[14].

[9] WILL, *o.c.* (n. 6), pp. 313-314; L.L. GRABBE, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian*, London 1994, p. 276.

[10] W. OTTO, *Zur Geschichte der Zeit des 6. Ptolemäers. Ein Beitrag zur Politik und zum Staatsrecht des Hellenismus* (Abhandlungen der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Phil.-hist. Abt. NF 11), München 1934, pp. 47, 49.

[11] MØRKHOLM, *o.c.* (n. 8), p. 74, mentions the level of the Nile at the end of the hostilities, but cf. the discussion of שמץ by VAN DER WOUDE, *o.c.* (n. 1), p. 67; moreover, Mørkholm's chronology is shaky (C. HABICHT, *The Seleucids and Their Rivals*, in: *Cambridge Ancient History* VIII, Cambridge 1989², p. 344 n. 68).

[12] Porphyry apud HIERONYMUS, *De Antichristo in Danielem* (11.25-26) [IV] 98-99 (text according to F. GLORIE, *S. Hieronymi presbyteri commentariorum in Danielem libri III <IV>* (Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina 75A), Turnholti 1964): "who will simulate peace with his sister's son, and will eat bread with him, and will occupy Egypt after that".

[13] This king was also called Ptolemy VII and Ptolemy VIII Physcon. The confusion originated from the very short reign of Ptolemy VII Eupator (in 145) and the exile of the Ptolemy mentioned here between 163 and 145, so that his reign came in two parts: 170-163 (together with Ptolemy VI Philometor) and 145-116 (see WILL, *o.c.* (n. 6), pp. 316, 318-319, 426).

[14] See G.W. LOREIN, *Some Aspects of the Life and Death of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. A New Presentation of Old Viewpoints*, in *Ancient Society* 31 (2001), pp. 157-171 (pp. 163-164 n. 38).

It is unclear whether the plunder Antiochus IV took to Syria was taken from Egypt or from the Temple in Jerusalem that he raided as he returned home, apparently because of the unrest there. In doing this he violated the "holy covenant" (v. 28b), the Jewish religion.

The second phase of the Sixth Syrian War (168)[15] is described in vv. 29-30a. Indeed, the war did not end well for Antiochus IV, although he was the one who had started it[16]. The ships of the Western coastlands (or Kittim) here refer to the Romans[17]. Antiochus IV was terrified when it appeared that with these ships came a man called Popilius Laenas. He was a man with a difficult character, who presented the Roman Senate's ultimatum to Antiochus IV in a manner that contradicted all diplomatic rules: he drew a circle around Antiochus IV and said: ἐνταῦθα βουλεύου ("make a decision there"). Antiochus IV, apparently not foreseeing the results of his deed, withdrew[18] (v. 30aα). At this time those living at the south-eastern borders of the Roman Empire also started to realise that the upcoming empire would not tolerate any competition.

[15] See in general WILL, *o.c.* (n. 6), pp. 320-325, and MØRKHOLM, *o.c.* (n. 8), pp. 88-101.

[16] WILL, *o.c.* (n. 6), p. 321, and MØRKHOLM, *o.c.* (n. 8), pp. 91-92.

[17] This word originally referred to the inhabitants of Κίτιον, modern-day Larnaka, a city on Cyprus. It came to refer to all Greeks, and to all those living in the West. LXX and HIERONYMUS, *De Antichristo in Danielem* (11.28b-30a) [IV] 123 have Ῥωμαῖοι and "Romani" respectively here. The Kittim also appear in Num. 24 (where Tg Onkelos offers רומאי) and in the War Scroll from Qumran, but these texts may be referring to other nations.

[18] APPIAN, *Syriaca* 66; TITUS LIVIUS XLV 10.8, 12.5; E.R. BEVAN, *The House of Seleucus II*, London 1902, pp. 144-145; W.W. TARN, *The Greeks in Bactria and India*, Cambridge 1951², p. 192, WILL, *o.c.* (n. 6), pp. 321-322, 325; HABICHT, *o.c.* (n. 11), pp. 344-345; L. MOOREN, *Antiochos IV. Epiphanes und das ptolemäische Königtum*, in: J. BINGEN – G. NACHTERGAEL (Edd.), *Actes du XV^e Congrès international de Papyrologie IV. Papyrologie documentaire* (Papyrologica Bruxellensia 19), Bruxelles 1979, pp. 78-86 (p. 85).

MØRKHOLM, *o.c.* (n. 8), p. 94 n. 24, argues that the idea that Antiochus IV knew Popilius Laenas from when he stayed in Rome, is "a sentimental addition". According to K. BRINGMANN, *Hellenistische Reform und Religionsverfolgung in Judäa. Eine Untersuchung zur jüdisch-hellenistischen Geschichte (175-163 v. Chr.)* (Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften. Phil.-hist. Kl. 3. Folge 132), Göttingen 1983, p. 138, Antiochus had gambled on the assumption that the Romans would probably be held up in Macedonia even longer.

On his way back from Egypt, Antiochus IV took his frustration with the defeat he had suffered out on the Jewish nation (v. 30aβ), in the form of a punitive expedition. When his army withdrew, the hostilities did not cease, and his general Apollon was forced to take the city (v. 31a). He established the Acra at the South of the Temple Mount, reorganised the *polis* there, putting Syrians in place who of course took their Syrian cult with them (v. 31bα). The desecration was completed with the establishment of the שִׁקּוּץ מְשֹׁמֵם, the "abomination that causes desolation". This indicated an official approval of the actual foreign sacrifices (v. 31bα)[19].

On 15 Kislev 145 (Seleucid Era) (i.e. 6 December 167), the שִׁקּוּץ מְשֹׁמֵם was established: a pun on Ζεὺς Ὀλύμπιος. It is assumed, with reference to Jerome[20], that an image of Zeus Olympius – as an alias of Antiochus IV – was placed on top of the original altar, and that in front of this a new altar was installed[21] (Dan. 11.31bβ; I Macc. 1.54a; II Macc. 6.2).

In v. 32 we find two groups: the disobedient, who are led into even more evil by Antiochus IV, and the obedient ("the people who know their God")[22], who put their loyalty to the Covenant into action. V. 33 is about the Chasidim, v. 34a about the Maccabees. "Will stumble" in v. 33 indicates the heavy persecution they will

[19] For this phase in history I mostly follow the reconstruction offered by V. TCHERIKOVER (†), *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, Philadelphia 1959; see LOREIN, *o.c.* (n. 14), pp. 61-66.

[20] HIERONYMUS, *De Antichristo in Danielem* (11.31) [IV] 173-175: "in templo Hierusalem Iouis Olympii simulacrum et Antiochi statuas ponerent, quas nunc 'abominationem desolationis' uocat." ("... to place in the Temple of Jerusalem an image of Jupiter Olympius and statues of Antiochus, which [Daniel] now calls 'abomination of desolation'").

[21] H.H. ROWLEY, *Menelaus and the Abomination of Desolation*, in: *Studia orientalia Ioanni PEDERSEN ... dicata*, Hauniae 1953, pp. 303-315 (p. 315).

V. TCHERIKOVER, *o.c.* (n. 19), pp. 194-195, 200, accepts – as does Bickermann – that it is about Syrian gods, but explains this by noting that the citizens of the Acra (the decision makers of those days) were of part Syrian stock; in order to obtain the royal approval of the new sacrificial cult the name was translated into Zeus Olympius, a god with whom Antiochus IV had been on good terms from the start (J.G. BUNGE, *Münzen als Mittel politischer Propaganda: Antiochos IV. Epiphanes von Syrien*, in *Studii Clasice* 16 (1974), pp. 43-52 (p. 44); J. ZAHLE, *Religious Motifs on Seleucid Coins*, in: P. BILDE E.A. (Edd.), *Religion and Religious Practice in the Seleucid Kingdom* (Studies in Hellenistic Civilization 1), Aarhus 1990, pp. 125-139 (pp. 128-130).

[22] ידע: not in an intellectual, but in an existential sense.

endure. Many people were forced by the Maccabees' heavy-handed actions to join them (v. 34b). V. 35 points out what the purpose of the heavy persecution was: some were afraid, others felt encouraged[23]. The verse ends with the same words as v. 27.

Many exegetes are of the opinion that that which follows in v. 36 does not match our information from other sources, and that this verse may be the point from which later readers will start to think of the Antichrist. However, vv. 36-39 clearly discuss Antiochus IV's attitude towards the gods. He left the gods that were linked to the House of the Seleucids ("the gods of his fathers") as well as the gods linked to the House of the Ptolemies[24] (v. 37), and turned to "the god of fortresses" (v. 38a). There are many interpretations of this term. The simplest one with an eye to v. 38b is that it concerns the god *War*, to whom he gave all his possessions[25]. Finally, v. 39 says that he will win followers by giving them land, but it should be noted that a different translation is also possible, now supported by a recently published text from Qumran[26].

When we arrive at v. 40, the doubt of the readers increases even more. It is difficult to keep seeing Antiochus IV here, but it is possible, since the verse may be a recapitulation of the events before 168, or a description of events about which we do not have sufficient information from other sources[27]. On the other hand, the

[23] AALDERS, *o.c.* (n. 4), p. 293.

[24] Granted that the interpretation of J.G. BUNGE, *Der "Gott der Festungen" und der "Liebling der Frauen". Zur Identifizierung der Götter in Dan. 11,36-39*, in *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 4 (1973), pp. 169-182 (pp. 178-182), who states that this is about Dumuzi/Adonis/Dionysius (cf. the epithet for this god: τριπόθητος) as a representative of the Ptolemaic pantheon, is right.

[25] E.J. YOUNG, *The Prophecy of Daniel*, Grand Rapids 1949, p. 249; about Antiochus' religious self-images, see also LOREIN, *o.c.* (n. 14), Part III.

[26] AALDERS, *o.c.* (n. 4), p. 298; J. SIEVERS, *Jerusalem, the Akra, and Josephus*, in: F. PARENTE – J. SIEVERS (Edd.), *Josephus and the History of the Greco-Roman Period. Essays in Memory of Morton Smith* (Studia Post-Biblica 41), Leiden 1994, pp. 195-209 (p. 205). Antiochus was going to pay his followers by giving them land that used to belong to Jews who had fled Jerusalem because of the religious crisis (MØRKHOLM, *o.c.* (n. 8), p. 145; E. WILL – C. ORRIEUX, *Ioudaïsmos – Hellènismos. Essai sur le judaïsme judéen à l'époque hellénistique*, Nancy 1986, p. 142). For 4Q248 6, see M. BROSHI – Esther ESHEL, *The Greek King is Antiochus IV (4QHistorical Text=4Q248)*, in *Journal of Jewish Studies* 48 (1997), pp. 120-129 (p. 127).

[27] Cf. M. DELCOR, *Le livre de Daniel* (Sources Bibliques), Paris 1971, pp. 246-247. See also below the section on Revelation for the idea of "recapitulation". For another interpretation, see VAN DER WOUDE, *o.c.* (n. 1), pp. 63-67.

author stresses more than in the preceding passages that this is about events taking place during the end times (cf. v. 40 with vv. 27 and 35), although he could probably not distinguish between the events in the days of Antiochus IV from the end time proper. The next passage (from 12.1) is definitely eschatological. For us however, looking at it from a completely different perspective in time, there is a difference, since we cannot describe the days of Antiochus IV as the end times. The figure described has the following characteristics. Unrighteousness and deceit are clear from v. 21 (בַּחֲלַקְלַקּוֹת), v. 23 (מִרְמָה), v. 27 (כָּזָב יְדַבְּרוּ). A murderous attitude is clear from v. 22 (יִשָּׁטְפוּ וְיִשָּׁבֵרוּ), v. 26 (וְנָפְלוּ חֲלָלִים רַבִּים)[28] and v. 44 (לְהַשְׁמִיד וּלְהַחֲרִים רַבִּים). His attitude towards religion is clear from v. 28 (לִבּוֹ עַל־בְּרִית קֹדֶשׁ), v. 30 (וְזָעַם עַל־בְּרִית־קֹדֶשׁ), and also from the whole body of vv. 36-39, where it is stated that this figure will turn away from all existing religion and try to persuade others to do so too.

It is clear that with these traits all the ingredients of the Antichrist theme are at hand as soon as the book of Daniel was published. It is also clear that Antiochus IV played an important role in the elaboration of the theme.

II. The New Testament

Jesus' Eschatological Discourse[29]

In his discourse on the End of the Age (Mt. 24), Jesus mentions in 24.15 the βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως (comp. with the parr. in Mk. 13.14 and Lk. 21.20). The βδέλυγμα is of course a reference to the שִׁקּוּץ מְשֹׁמֵם from the book of Daniel. The passage most relevant to our subject is Dan. 11.31, which has been discussed above. What

[28] And possibly from v. 38, if that verse does indeed refer to the god of Warfare, as YOUNG, *o.c.* (n. 25), p. 249, suggests.

[29] As regards to the synoptic problem, nearly every priority is defendable (cf. D. WENHAM, *The Rediscovery of Jesus' Eschatological Discourse* (Gospel Perspectives 4), Sheffield 1984, pp. 193-196). Because Origen wrote a commentary on *Matthew*, we will start from this passage. Mark's version is very close to this passage; Luke's is much further removed. As regards the date, the Fathers would support a pre-70 origin for this discourse (see E.E. ELLIS, *Christ and the Future in New Testament History* (Supplements to Novum Testamentum 97), Leiden 2000, p. 233).

meaning did this term have in New Testament days? How was the phenomenon described in Dan. 11 interpreted in Jesus' days[30]?

The βδέλυγμα foretold by Daniel refers in general to an idol or a pagan altar for which a strong aversion is felt[31]. Grosheide believes this refers to the standards of the Roman army, which were indeed a subject of reverence[32]. Although the word is neuter, ἑστηκότα in Mk. 13.14, which is incongruous with this, seems to indicate that βδέλυγμα could also refer to a *person*[33]. It will be standing on a holy place, ὅπου οὐ δεῖ; this last description (from Mk. 13.14) seems very vague, but implies that it is improper in the most absolute sense. On the basis of Acts 6.13 one could call the Temple in Jerusalem the holy place par excellence[34]. On seeing the sign, peo-

[30] J. VAN BRUGGEN, *Marcus. Het evangelie volgens Petrus* (Commentaar op het Nieuwe Testament[3]), Kampen 1988, pp. 405-411, tries hard to better harmonise the prophecies in Dan. 9 and 11 and Jesus' Eschatological Discourse, but finally he is forced to conclude a partial fulfilment. Text according to Barbara & K. ALAND E.A., *Novum Testamentum Graece*, Stuttgart 1993[27].

[31] Cf. Deut. 29.16; II Kgs. 11.5; I Macc. 1.54,59; Rom. 2.22. G. VAN DEN BRINK, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, Nehru Nagar Vijayawada 1997, p. 342; H.A. BRONGERS, *I Koningen* (Prediking van het Oude Testament), Nijkerk 1967, p. 117. According to VAN BRUGGEN, *o.c.* (n. 30), pp. 305-306, this refers to the destruction of the Temple.

[32] F.W. GROSHEIDE, *Het heilig evangelie volgens Mattheus* (Kommentaar op het Nieuwe Testament[1]), Amsterdam 1922, p. 287. Although the works of A. VON DOMASZEWSKI, *Die Fahnen im römischen Heere* (1885) and *Die Religion des römischen Heeres* (1895), both republished in *Aufsätze zur römischen Heeresgeschichte*, Darmstadt 1972, remain fundamental, a more recent summary may be found in J. HELGELAND, *Roman Army Religion*, in: W. HAASE (Ed.), *Religion (Heidentum: römische Religion, Allgemeines)* (ANRW II 16.2), Berlin – New York 1978, pp. 1470-1505 (pp. 1476-1478). J. RÜPKE, *Domi militiae. Die religiöse Konstruktion des Krieges in Rom*, Stuttgart 1990, pp. 184-187, is quite critical, but finally concludes also that the standards were revered.

[33] R.H. GUNDRY, *Matthew. A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution*, Grand Rapids 1994[2], p. 482, refers for this to the parallel traditions of II Thess. 2 and Rev. 13, where there is mention of a person as well. For the parallelism of these traditions, see also WENHAM, *o.c.* (n. 29), pp. 205-206.

[34] VAN DEN BRINK, *ibid.* (n. 31). GROSHEIDE, *o.c.* (n. 32), p. 288, thinks of the Church as a "holy place" for the final fulfilment of this passage. Lk. 21.20 says Jerusalem surrounded by army camps, indicating this will take place just before the attack (I.H. MARSHALL, *The Gospel of Luke. A Commentary on the Greek Text* (New International Greek Testament Commentary), Exeter 1978, p. 772).

ple are to think of Daniel's prophecy[35] and flee – apparently fleeing will be worthwhile – without hesitation[36], not to any fortified city, but to a desolate area[37] (vv. 15-18). This is clearly described as a future event, although people in New Testament times evidently knew about the "abomination that makes desolate" introduced by Antiochus IV Epiphanes, which they apparently viewed as an interim fulfilment of prophecy, while expecting a further religious and military conquest of the Temple in an eschatological perspective.

That time will be very difficult, particularly for women who are pregnant or have very small children (under the age of two[38]) (v. 19). The listeners are also instructed to pray[39] that it will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath (v. 20). In winter the weather is less ideal for refugees, and on the Sabbath people would wrestle with their consciences because they would be travelling farther than the allowed distance, the city gates are closed and no transport is available[40]. The Sabbath is not mentioned in Mark's version (Mk. 13.18). The word θλῖψις does not have an article here (v. 21)[41], in contrast to Revelation 7.14, but it already refers to "that final series of woes which will immediately precede the end"[42] and therefore

[35] GUNDRY, *o.c.* (n. 33), p. 481; J. VAN BRUGGEN, *o.c.* (n. 30), p. 307.

[36] The stairs were built at the outside of the house (see R. REICH, *Building Materials and Architectural Elements*, in: J. AVIRAM (Ed.), *The Architecture of Ancient Israel. From the Prehistoric to the Persian Periods. In Memory of Immanuel (Munya) DUNAYEVSKY*, Jerusalem 1992, p. 14); people should not go inside in order to fetch something, or are even supposed to flee over the rooftops (according to GUNDRY, *o.c.* (n. 33), p. 483, with reference to FLAVIUS JOSEPHUS, *Antiquitates* XIII 140). People would go into the fields wearing their coats, and leave them by the edge of the field as the day became warmer (see VAN BRUGGEN, *o.c.* (n. 30), p. 313).

[37] VAN DEN BRINK, *o.c.* (n. 31), p. 343; see also MARSHALL, *o.c.* (n. 34), p. 772.

[38] See S. SAFRAI, *Home and Family*, in: S. SAFRAI – M. STERN (Edd.), *The Jewish People in the First Century. Historical Geography, Political History, Social, Cultural and Religious Life and Institutions II*, Assen – Amsterdam 1976, pp. 728-792 (p. 768).

[39] Cf. F. BASSIN, *L'évangile de Marc* (Commentaire Evangélique de la Bible), Vaux-sur-Seine 1984, p. 247.

[40] According to G. VAN DEN BRINK, *ibid.* (n. 31).

[41] Mk. 13.19 only mentions θλῖψις, Lk. 21.23 ἀνάγκη μεγάλη, but Luke goes his own way after this. We find θλῖψις μεγάλη without article also in I Macc. 9.27.

[42] R.H. MOUNCE, *The Book of Revelation* (New International Commentary on the New Testament), Grand Rapids 1977, p. 173.

has cosmic dimensions. If the duration were not to be cut short (ἐκολοβώθησαν)[43] for the sake of the elect[44], no-one would survive[45] (v. 22). Many ψευδόχριστοι καὶ ψευδοπροφῆται will appear (possibly to be viewed as *hendiadys*), who will perform many impressive signs and wonders. This theme also occurs in Deut. 13.1[46], II Thess. 2.9 and Rev. 13.13[47]. By doing this they will almost lead the elect astray, but fortunately this is impossible (vv. 23-24). V. 25 may be considered as a closing formula.

Paul's Second Epistle to the Thessalonians

In II Thess. 2.1-12[48] we find a relatively extensive description of an awful person. The text we adopt calls him ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀνομίας, but the manuscript tradition is not unequivocal here: the reading ἁμαρτίας instead of ἀνομίας also occurs frequently. Since the reading ἀνομίας could have originated under the influence of ὁ

[43] Cf. I En. 80.2; CšD (MS Antonin B 798) i 14 (קרבת קץ ועוד לא תאחר : "Thou hast brought nearer the end and Thou wilst not postpone it anymore."); II Bar. 83.1, although it is not linked to God's kindness in these places.

[44] R.H. CHARLES, *A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life. In Israel, in Judaism, and in Christianity*, London 1913², p. 381, sees two different traditions here: one to encourage the disciples, and one concerning calamities that do not affect the disciples. Although one might doubt that the disciples were ever confronted with the things Jesus discusses here, Charles simply shifts the problem to that of a lack of understanding on the part of the editor.

[45] VAN BRUGGEN, *o.c.* (n. 30), p. 312, claims that this should not be taken in a soteriological sense, but otherwise that thought is not elaborated.

[46] If anyone in Israel claiming religious authority leads fellow-Israelites into idolatry (U. RÜTERSWÖRDEN, *Das Böse in der deuteronomischen Schultheologie*, in: T. VEIJOLA (Ed.), *Das Deuteronomium und seine Querbeziehungen* (Schriften der Finnischen Exegetischen Gesellschaft 62), Helsinki – Göttingen 1996, pp. 223-241 (p. 230)), and if this person announces a sign or miracle that would legitimise him, and if this announcement comes true, one must not simply conclude that this prophet is reliable. A prophet who advocates idolatry should never be followed (P.C. CRAIGIE, *The Book of Deuteronomy* (New International Commentary on the Old Testament), Grand Rapids 1976, pp. 223, 262-263), as God is the one who must be followed and his commandments kept. The false prophet should be killed because he has spoken about God in a deceitful way. BASSIN, *o.c.* (n. 39), p. 248 n. 1, also points out the use of δώσουσιν in Mt. 24.24 and of נתן in Deut. 13.2.

[47] For these verses, see below. For the various links, see WENHAM, *o.c.* (n. 29), pp. 205-206.

[48] According to F.F. BRUCE, *1 & 2 Thessalonians* (Word Biblical Commentary), Waco 1982, p. 162, this is the core of the Epistle.

ἄνομος in v. 8, ἁμαρτίας could well be the original reading. On the other hand, ἁμαρτία is a rather frequent and even more general word, so that this could also have been introduced from elsewhere[49]. As with νόμος obviously God's Law is intended, the two terms amount to the same meaning. The Hebraism is a strong expression which to Paul is much more powerful than the singular ἄνομος (or ἁμαρτωλός)[50]. We may suppose that the man of lawlessness is *human*[51]. Anyhow, he clearly is a *being*, and this is different from the expression βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως in Mt. 24. Although the term Antichrist does not appear here, this passage is often referred to, and the Antichrist is often equated to this man of lawlessness[52].

Paul warns against expecting the end of times too soon, even though the impression may have been given that this end is very near – through a revelation (unauthorised or wrongly understood), through teaching or through a letter from Paul himself or from others (vv. 1-3a)[53]. No, before the absolute end the rebellion must come and the man of lawlessness must be revealed[54], who is doomed to destruction (υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας)[55]. Paul outlines exhaustively that his actions will immediately precede Christ's

[49] For the adopted text, see ALAND & ALAND, *o.c.* (n. 30). M.J. VAN DER WESTHUIZEN, *De Antichrist in het Nieuwe Testament*, Amsterdam 1916, p. 58 n. 3 (p. 59), chooses for ἁμαρτίας. F.F. BRUCE, *Antichrist in the Early Church*, in: ID., *A Mind for What Matters*, Grand Rapids 1990, pp. 181-197 (p. 184), considers ἀνομίας to be a better reading.

[50] B. RIGAUX, *Saint-Paul. Les épîtres aux Thessaloniciens* (Etudes Bibliques), Paris – Gembloux 1956, p. 657. Cf. F. BLASS – A. DEBRUNNER – F. REHKOPF, *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch*, Göttingen 1984[16], § 162.6.

[51] Cf. W. TRILLING, *Der zweite Brief an die Thessalonicher* (Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar), Zürich – Einsiedeln – Köln – Neukirchen-Vluyn 1980, p. 384.

[52] Cf. e.g. already TERTULLIANUS, *Adversus Marcionem* V 16.4 (text according to A. KROYMANN, *Adversus Marcionem*, in: *Quinti Septimi Florentis Tertulliani Opera I. Opera catholica. Adversus Marcionem* (Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina 1), Turnholti 1954, pp. 437-726): "Quis autem est *homo delicti, filius perditionis* ...? Secundum nos quidem antichristus".

[53] For this problem, see C. MASSON, *Les deux épîtres de Saint Paul aux Thessaloniciens* (Commentaire du Nouveau Testament), Neuchâtel – Paris 1957, pp. 93-94; BRUCE, *o.c.* (n. 48), p. 163.

[54] This ἀποκαλυφθῇ rather points at the similarity between the Antichrist and Christ, and does not indicate pre-existence (MASSON, *o.c.* (n. 53), p. 95).

[55] Cf. MASSON, *o.c.* (n. 53), p. 95.

return. This is established from the anacoluthon ὅτι ἐὰν μὴ ἔλθῃ ... ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς ἀνομίας (v. 3) linked with the preceding ἐνέστηκεν ἡ ἡμέρα τοῦ κυρίου (v. 2), and from the destruction of the man of lawlessness, by Jesus Christ during his return (v. 8)[56].

Apparently the audience knows how this is to be understood, because Paul is using the definite article[57]. According to v. 4 he will exalt himself over every existing religion (ὑπεραιρόμενος ἐπὶ πάντα λεγόμενον[58] θεὸν ἢ σέβασμα) and proclaim himself to be god (ὥστε αὐτὸν εἰς τὸν ναὸν[59] τοῦ θεοῦ καθίσαι[60], ἀποδεικνύντα ἑαυτὸν ὅτι ἐστὶν θεός). Here he is much more a false god than a false Messiah[61]. During this period others will also turn away from God, as ἡ ἀποστασία is mentioned in one and the same breath with the revelation of the man of lawlessness (v. 3)[62].

[56] By importing the notion of *corporate personality* here, MASSON, *o.c.* (n. 53), p. 106, sees the forerunners included in the Antichrist himself. In my view it is more correct to categorise them under the *principle* of lawlessness (v. 7). See also H. BERKHOF, *Christus de zin der geschiedenis*, Nijkerk 1958, pp. 109-110, 112.

[57] They know this because of Paul's teaching: MASSON, *o.c.* (n. 53), p. 97; BERKHOF, *o.c.* (n. 57), p. 107 (but apparently Paul deems it necessary to word it extensively after all). Or, from other sources (the general teaching of the early-Christian Church, or even Jewish tradition): MASSON, *o.c.* (n. 53), p. 95, D. FLUSSER, *The Hubris of the Antichrist in a Fragment from Qumran*, in *Immanuel* 10 (1980), pp. 31-37 (p. 33); H. BURGMANN, *Vorgeschichte und Frühgeschichte der essenischen Gemeinden von Qumrân und Damaskus* (Arbeiten zum Neuen Testament und Judentum 7), Frankfurt/Main – Bern – New York 1987, pp. 487-490. According to TRILLING, *o.c.* (n. 51), pp. 83-84, the definite article indicates that it does not just concern a lawless person, but the one in whom lawlessness reaches its summum. He states that this passage is not based on Jewish tradition at all (*o.c.*, p. 87).

[58] This word may not be taken restrictively, as if the Antichrist does not resist the true God (MASSON, *o.c.* (n. 53), p. 96 n. 1; TRILLING, *o.c.* (n. 51), p. 85).

[59] According to VAN DER WESTHUIZEN, *o.c.* (n. 49), pp. 59-60, this is meant figuratively (as is καθίσαι). However, it is often argued that this concerns the (rebuilt) Temple of Jerusalem. E.g. BRUCE, *o.c.* (n. 48), pp. 168-169; RIGAUX, *o.c.* (n. 51), pp. 660-661. According to Bruce and Rigaux (*ibid.*) this implies, however, that the Antichrist wants to assume all divine rights.

[60] Sitting in a temple is reserved for the godhead; the others who are present stand or kneel (MASSON, *o.c.* (n. 53), p. 96 n. 5).

[61] E.g. MASSON, *o.c.* (n. 53), p. 104; TRILLING, *o.c.* (n. 51), p. 86; F. BASSIN, *Les épîtres de Paul aux Thessaloniciens* (Commentaire Evangélique de la Bible), Vaux-sur-Seine 1991, pp. 224, 228 (but: see also pp. 245, 249).

[62] This word can have a political as well as a religious meaning (BRUCE, *o.c.* (n. 48), p. 166; BASSIN, *o.c.* (n. 61), pp. 212-213).

In a parenthesis Paul reminds the readers that he has stressed in his oral teachings that the very end cannot come as long as something/someone is holding it back (κατέχον/κατέχων)[63]. In the meantime the *principle* of lawlessness is already working[64]. This reminds us of the Antichrist's πρόδρομοι, of the many antichrists who may act throughout the course of history. Afterwards the *man* of lawlessness will be revealed; he will act according to the power of Satan (v. 9: κατ ' ἐνέργειαν τοῦ σατανᾶ), he will perform all kinds of counterfeit[65] signs and miracles, which will be accompanied by the powerful delusion of those who perish (vv. 8a, 9-10a). Then Paul moves on to a soteriological and theistic perspective. The man of lawlessness can only exercise this influence on those who do not love the truth[66]. God will send those people a powerful delusion, so that they will believe the lie and thus bring about their own judgement[67] (vv. 10b-12). Then the end will come: Jesus Christ will come back and simply by his presence end the activities of the man of lawlessness (v. 8b).

The First and Second Epistles of John

In I Jn. 2.18-23 we find a short description of the Antichrist. The actions of the antichrists (plural) are seen within an eschatological framework (v. 18: ἐσχάτη ὥρα ἐστίν). It is not clear, however, whether he means that from the day of Pentecost we have

[63] Much has been written on the question what exactly this entails. As VAN DER WESTHUIZEN, *o.c.* (n. 49), pp. 61-63, remarks, this is (probably) not of much concern for our subject. For the problem, see MASSON, *o.c.* (n. 53), pp. 98-100; BRUCE, *o.c.* (n. 48), pp. 175-177; TRILLING, *o.c.* (n. 51), pp. 89-102.

[64] This does not mean that also the Antichrist himself exists at this moment, i.e. that he is pre-existent (RIGAUX, *o.c.* (n. 50), p. 666 [sic]; L. HARTMAN, *The Eschatology of 2 Thessalonians as Included in a Communication*, in: R.F. COLLINS (Ed.), *The Thessalonian Correspondence* (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 87), Leuven 1990, pp. 470-485 (p. 480 n. 51)).

[65] In the sense of "serving deceit": MASSON, *o.c.* (n. 53), p. 102 n. 1; TRILLING, *o.c.* (n. 51), p. 105; BASSIN, *o.c.* (n. 61), pp. 248-249; S.H.T. PAGE, *Powers of Evil. A Biblical Study of Satan and Demons*, Grand Rapids – Leicester 1995, p. 200.

[66] I.e. against those who are rooted in God's revelation: cf. MASSON, *o.c.* (n. 53), p. 103 n. 1; RIGAUX, *o.c.* (n. 50), p. 677.

[67] It appears that the time of the Antichrist is no longer a period of grace: people will already be confronted with the consequences of choices made earlier (cf. MASSON, *o.c.* (n. 53), p. 103). Cf. Zech. 11.6, 9!

been living in the End Times[68], or whether he is thinking of the eschatological period proper[69]. The absence of a definite article here does not bring clarification: it only proves that ὥρα should not be taken literally[70]. However, another Antichrist must come, because John starts from that position (v. 18: ἠκούσατε ὅτι ἀντίχριστος ἔρχεται)[71]. Apparently the addressees have heard (ἠκούσατε) about the Antichrist before. Nonetheless a description follows, albeit a short one. Are we, with Bruce, to conclude from this that the Christians have known of the Antichrist since the coming of Christ, as the Antichrist is only the inversion of Christ[72]? We also have to ask ourselves here what the meaning is of the prefix ἀντι-. Will the Antichrist present himself as the true Messiah, or rather as his great opponent[73]? Bruce also mentions the possibility that John

[68] The first Epistle of John was generally accepted by the Church Fathers to be the work of John the disciple of the Lord; the situation is less clear for the second Epistle (I.H. MARSHALL, *The Epistles of John* (New International Commentary on the New Testament), Grand Rapids 1978, pp. 48-49; A.D. BAUM, *Der neutestamentliche Kanon bei Eusebios (*Hist. Eccl. *III, 25, 1-7) im Kontext seiner literaturgeschichtlichen Arbeit*, in *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 73 (1997), pp. 307-348 (p. 317)). For our subject, however, no distinction has to be made.

[69] General End Times: R. SCHNACKENBURG, *Die Johannesbriefe* (Herders Kommentar), Freiburg 1953, p. 125; MARSHALL, *o.c.* (n. 68), pp. 148-150. Eschatological period proper: F. VOUGA, *Die Johannesbriefe* (Handbuch zum Neuen Testament), Tübingen 1990, pp. 42-43 (he even regards this as the Epistle's message proper); G. STRECKER, *Die Johannesbriefe* (Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neuen Testament), Göttingen 1989, p. 122; M. DE JONGE, *De brieven van Johannes* (Prediking van het Nieuwe Testament), Nijkerk 1988⁴, p. 103; H.-J. KLAUCK, *Der erste Johannesbrief* (Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar), Zürich – Braunschweig – Neukirchen-Vluyn 1991, p. 148; R.E. BROWN, *The Epistles of John* (Anchor Bible), Garden City 1982, pp. 330-332 (where the other possibility is also discussed).

[70] BLASS – DEBRUNNER – REHKOPF, *o.c.* (n. 50), § 258.

[71] Cf. G.B. CAIRD, *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine*, London 1966, p. 163.

[72] BRUCE, *o.c.* (n. 49), p. 183. Also S.S. SMALLEY, *1, 2, 3, John* (Word Biblical Commentary), Waco 1984, p. 98, goes back quite far, to the Intertestamental tradition concerning the Antichrist. Cf. KLAUCK, *o.c.* (n. 69), p. 150. This is challenged by C.E. HILL, *Antichrist from the Tribe of Dan*, in *Journal of Theological Studies* 46 (1995), pp. 99-117 (pp. 114-115): in his opinion, John could also be speaking about the Jewish expectation of a Messiah. In my opinion, this would correspond only quite indirectly with the Apostle's words.

[73] VAN DER WESTHUIZEN, *o.c.* (n. 49), p. 70, emphasises that ἀντίχριστος should not be understood as ψευδόχριστος, but as ἀντικείμενος. According to Shifra SZNOL, *Compounds with ἀντι- in Hellenistic Jewish Sources*, in *Filologia*

is referring to an exposition by Paul[74], but the term Ἀντίχριστος does not occur in the Pauline Epistles and is apparently used for the first time here[75]. Strecker is able to state that these words refer back to John's second Epistle, as he assumes that chronologically John's second Epistle was written before the first[76]. What is the force of the absence of a definite article here[77]? Does it mean that the Antichrist was not yet known[78], or was this word a proper name[79]? An Antichrist is coming (ἀντίχριστος ἔρχεται), but it is not clear whether, when John was writing, this was going to take place in the future, or, since "this is the last hour", the Antichrist had already come. The statement that there are many Antichrists now (νῦν ἀντίχριστοι πολλοὶ γεγόνασιν) could lead us to suspect that John was still waiting for the one great Antichrist. Or does he mean a "corporate personality", a single Antichrist made up of many antichrists[80]? Is John regarding his opponents as the Antichrist, so that the conflict with which he is confronted is fulfilling his Antichrist expectations[81]? In other words: which is primary, the one Antichrist preceded by many antichrists[82], the many antichrists cul-

Neotestamentaria 3 (1990), pp. 109-114 (pp. 112-113), Tertullian was the first to interpret the prefix in Ἀντίχριστος as "against, opposed to", and from his interpretation the prefix started a fruitful career in the West-European languages.

[74] BRUCE, *o.c.* (n. 49), p. 184.

[75] KLAUCK, *o.c.* (n. 69), p. 150, albeit "um einen vorgegebenen komplexen Themenbereich prägnant zu benennen".

[76] STRECKER, *o.c.* (n. 69), p. 338 n. 18. MARSHALL, *o.c.* (n. 68), p. 10, also conjectures this order. Lastly BURGMANN, *o.c.* (n. 57), pp. 488, 490, suggests the possibility of a dependency on the ideas of Qumran, but this is very hypothetical.

[77] At least according to the best text-critical choice; see e.g. SCHNACKENBURG, *o.c.* (n. 69), p. 126 n. 2.

[78] BLASS – DEBRUNNER – REHKOPF, *o.c.* (n. 50), § 252: "Bei Neueinführung von bisher Unbekanntem".

[79] BLASS – DEBRUNNER – REHKOPF, *o.c.* (n. 50), § 260.

[80] E.g. RIGAUX, *o.c.* (n. 50), p. 278; KLAUCK, *o.c.* (n. 69), p. 151. Against: VAN DER WESTHUIZEN, *o.c.* (n. 49), p. 74. To VOUGA, *o.c.* (n. 69), p. 44, this is only a typological singular.

[81] E.g. L.J. LIETAERT PEERBOLTE, *The Antecedents of Antichrist. A Traditio-Historical Study of the Earliest Christian Views on Eschatological Opponents* (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism [olim Studia Post-Biblica] 49), Leiden 1996, pp. 99, 101-102, 113, 214-215.

[82] E.g. STRECKER, *o.c.* (n. 69), pp. 338-339; MARSHALL, *o.c.* (n. 68), p. 151; DE JONGE, *o.c.* (n. 69), p. 102. (It is not necessary here to speak of *Entmythologisierung*, "de-mythologising"; according to his p. 102 n. 155, the "myth" is maintained for the future.)

minating in one Antichrist[83], or the Antichrist as a corporate personality?

The many antichrists have formally been part of the Christian community (ἐξ ἡμῶν ἐξῆλθαν), but were apparently not involved wholeheartedly (οὐκ ἦσαν ἐξ ἡμῶν). If the opposite were the case – but this is presented as untrue[84] – they would have stayed.

In the following verse the same subject is looked at from a divine viewpoint: the antichrists had not received God's anointing[85], whereas the addressees had (ὑμεῖς χρῖσμα ἔχετε ἀπὸ τοῦ ἁγίου). Through that anointing (χρῖσμα) the addressees were in Christ (Χριστός), and therefore did not belong to the Antichrist's ('Αντίχριστος) camp[86].

Perhaps the antichrists were wholeheartedly involved after all, but at least they "denied that Jesus is the Christ"[87], they "denied the Father and the Son", they "denied the Son". Why are these three descriptions being used? What exactly do they mean? We will find a further description in II John.

Is ὁ ψεύστης the same as the Antichrist[88]? Both words are used in the same context, but it is not certain. Anyhow, we have here a

[83] To B.B. WARFIELD (†), *Antichrist*, in *Expository Times* 32 (1920-'21), pp. 358-360 (pp. 359-360), this is a *possible* conclusion, but he remarks that John does not actually discuss this.

[84] STRECKER, *o.c.* (n. 69), p. 124 n. 19, does not take into account the equivalence (at least with the irrealis construction in mind) of Pluperfect (resultative aspect: "they would have stayed [until now]") and Imperfect ("they would have stayed [in the past]"). See BLASS – DEBRUNNER – REHKOPF, *o.c.* (n. 50), § 360 n. 4.

[85] God the Father: This interpretation is often mentioned as a possibility, but was never preferred in the commentaries I consulted. God the Son: DE JONGE, *o.c.* (n. 69), p. 114; BROWN, *o.c.* (n. 69), pp. 347-348; SCHNACKENBURG, *o.c.* (n. 69), p. 134; SMALLEY, *o.c.* (n. 72), p. 108; MARSHALL, *o.c.* (n. 68), p. 155; KLAUCK, *o.c.* (n. 69), p. 159.

[86] DE JONGE, *o.c.* (n. 69), pp. 110-112, who however mainly points at the parallel between the anointing and hearing the word. BROWN, *o.c.* (n. 69), pp. 345-347, considers the arguments for an anointing with the Holy Spirit to be the strongest. MARSHALL, *o.c.* (n. 68), pp. 153-155, pleads for a combination of the two ("the Word ... apprehended by [the converts] through the work of the Spirit in their hearts"). Exegetically this combination seems far-fetched, although practically speaking the two of course go together.

[87] The negation οὐκ after ἀρνούμενος is pleonastic (see BLASS – DEBRUNNER – REHKOPF, *o.c.* (n. 50), § 429.2).

[88] E.g. BROWN, *o.c.* (n. 69), p. 352; DE JONGE, *o.c.* (n. 69), p. 116. See also the interesting literary analysis by G. SÁNCHEZ MIELGO, *Perspectivas eclesiológicas*

context of deception and opposition to the truth. Also, there proves to be a parallel between the descriptions of antichrists and deceivers in John's Epistles and the descriptions of false prophets and deceivers in Deuteronomy[89].

To Vouga, who does not appear to have much sympathy for John, the use of the term "Antichrist" has just one goal, namely "die Konkurrenz zu disqualifizieren". Apparently the competition started after a schism in the Johannine School, which subsequently became very sectarian[90].

Should we conclude from this passage that a unique eschatological Antichrist will come from the Christian Church as well? This conclusion is not necessary after having read I Jn. 2.18-23. However, all our data match the idea of a *human* figure.

In I Jn. 4.3 we read something else about the Antichrist. Here John speaks about the spirit of the Antichrist, "which you have heard is coming" (ὃ ἀκηκόατε ὅτι ἔρχεται). Apparently this spirit is in the world already (ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἐστὶν ἤδη), but does this mean that the Antichrist himself is present as well? In other words: is this yet another of so many cases of both "already" and "not yet"[91]? Or do we have to make a distinction between the Antichrist and the spirit of the Antichrist? In that case, the Antichrist himself could be future[92].

Is the Antichrist in John's Epistle a *human* being? It seems that John speaks mainly about the forerunners of the Antichrist, false prophets and the like[93]. Although this is nowhere explicitly stated,

en la primera carta de Juan, in *Escritos del Vedat* 4 (1974), pp. 9-64 (p. 21: this is an "inclusio semítica", where vv. 22 and 23 announce the main elements of the antichrists (v. 18) alias the deceivers (v. 26)).

[89] Cf. Deut. 13.2-19 (SÁNCHEZ MIELGO, *o.c.* (n. 88), pp. 15-17; KLAUCK, *o.c.* (n. 69), p. 149).

[90] VOUGA, *o.c.* (n. 69), p. 43 (quote: "to disqualify the competitor"), 45, 63, 84. Against that, see MARSHALL, *o.c.* (n. 68), pp. 71-72. Similar situations are found with the Qumran Community at least, but also with the Fathers, where ἀντίχριστος is regularly used as a knock-down argument, and actually throughout the course of Church history (see e.g. C. HILL, *Antichrist in Seventeenth-Century England*, London 1971, pp. 3, 178).

[91] STRECKER, *o.c.* (n. 69), p. 214.

[92] E.g. SMALLEY, *o.c.* (n. 72), p. 100.

[93] Also for this passage (as for I Jn. 2.18-23, see above) a parallel with Deuteronomy has been established: Deut. 18.9-22 (SÁNCHEZ MIELGO, *o.c.* (n. 88), pp. 33-34).

they must be human, as it is unlikely that they are demons or spiritual beings integrated into the Johannine community. The words πᾶν πνεῦμα do not necessarily indicate they are spiritual beings, since a human being also has a spirit.

Another discussion point is the meaning of καὶ νῦν. Does it indicate a contrast between what they have heard in the past and that which is happening in the present[94]? A comparison with I Jn. 2.18 rather indicates a harmony between what they had heard and that which was happening[95].

Also in II Jn. 7 there is an alternation of singular and plural (πολλοὶ πλάνοι ... ὁμολογοῦντες - οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ πλάνος καὶ ὁ ἀντίχριστος). Although apparently one single definition of the Antichrist is given here, there are also some grammatical problems, which concern the demarcation of the object of ὁμολογοῦντες[96] and the predicative attribute that goes with it. Possibly there is not even a predicative attribute, in which case the whole phrase Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐρχόμενον ἐν σαρκί is the object[97].

The most obvious thing to think of is a historical context in which the writer condemns the Docetists[98], as they claimed that Jesus did not really come in the flesh and therefore only appeared to have a human body. According to some, the use of the present participle ἐρχόμενον[99] speaks against a Docetist context, but attributing a present or future time value to this participle leads to unlikely conclusions[100]. The participle here is only of aspectual value[101].

[94] E.g. SCHNACKENBURG, *o.c.* (n. 69), p. 199.

[95] BROWN, *o.c.* (n. 69), p. 337, speaks of a specific case of the general point.

[96] The present tense reflects the durative aspect: they did not just have a wrong creed once, but persisted in it.

[97] A variant of this is found in I John 4.2: πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ ὁμολογεῖ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθότα ...

[98] E.g. BRUCE, *o.c.* (n. 49), p. 182; STRECKER, *o.c.* (n. 69), p. 124 (on I John); DE JONGE, *o.c.* (n. 69), pp. 121-124; SMALLEY, *o.c.* (n. 72), pp. 101, 111-114 (in other parts of his letter John may be speaking against other heresies). Against: VOUGA, *o.c.* (n. 69), pp. 63, 83; STRECKER, *o.c.*, p. 334 (on II John).

[99] STRECKER, *o.c.* (n. 69), p. 334.

[100] E.g. with STRECKER, *o.c.* (n. 69), pp. 334-336. See KLAUCK, *o.c.* (n. 69), pp. 53-56.

[101] Another explanation is found with BROWN, *o.c.* (n. 69), p. 670; he speaks of "a stereotyped formula".

In any case, the deceptive and truth-opposed character of the Antichrist is stressed again.

Revelation[102]

With regard to the Antichrist theme, two groups of texts turn out to have been important for the Fathers: the whole of chapter 13 and the combination of 19.19-20 and 20.10.

The different interpretations of the book of Revelation can be divided into four schools: the preterist (contemporary-historical), the historicist, the futurist and the idealist (timeless symbolic) school[103]. For a right and complete interpretation, a combination of these approaches urges itself upon us[104].

First, the *Naherwartung* (the expectation that the fulfilment of a prophecy will take place in the near future) is important both to the Old Testament prophets and to John. In this context, the message of the book of Revelation for the Church of the end of the first Century is victory over persecution linked mainly with emperor worship. The preterist aspect of the interpretation plays an important role in this.

However, John certainly thought of the end times as well. This eschatological prophecy is filled in with historical events[105]. The message in this context is not yet clear to us. An extremely detailed prediction is impossible, but things will become clear once the event takes place. This is the futurist aspect of the interpretation.

[102] As with the other New Testament passages we discussed, I do not intend to delve deep into the backgrounds. For the sake of convenience, I will call the author of Revelation "John" without wondering whether he can be identified with the author of the Epistles of John. The Fathers would date the book of Revelation in the time of Domitian (fl. 81-96) (G.K. BEALE, *The Book of Revelation. A Commentary on the Greek Text* (New International Greek Text Commentary), Grand Rapids – Carlisle 1999, p. 19). For the authorship, see also BAUM, *o.c.* (n. 68), pp. 317, 331, 340.

[103] See MOUNCE, *o.c.* (n. 42), pp. 39-45; see also J. REILING, *De Openbaring van Johannes*, in: A.S. VAN DER WOUDE (Ed.), *Bijbels Handboek III. Het Nieuwe Testament*, Kampen 1987, pp. 501-517 (pp. 512-516); D. GUTHRIE, *New Testament Introduction*, London 1970[3], pp. 974-976.

[104] Against: H. KRAFT, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (Handbuch zum Neuen Testament), Tübingen 1974, p. 220.

[105] Cf. P. PRIGENT, *L'Apocalypse de Saint Jean* (Commentaire du Nouveau Testament), Genève 1988[2], p. 201; G.E. LADD, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, Grand Rapids 1972, pp. 12-13.

Certain elements and mechanisms are timeless and therefore repeatable; they have been repeated effectively throughout the course of history[106]. We will not go into the idealist aspect of the interpretation.

The historicist interpretation, which attempts to see the whole course of history from the first century AD displayed in the book of Revelation, seems too risky, if only because we will then have to assume a strict chronological order. Although it seems obvious to suspect that John would at least stick to some chronological order, a lot can be said for the recapitulation theory i.e. that the same point is consecutively brought forward from different perspectives.

So John speaks on behalf of God about past, present and future[107], although not all aspects appear in each chapter. The epistles to the seven churches should mainly be interpreted in a preteristic and idealistic fashion. The other passages can be interpreted mainly in a preteristic and futuristic fashion. The latter combination will therefore have to be applied in the passages studied here.

In Rev. 13.1-10 we find the most exhaustive description of the Beast, or rather Beasts, because we find two different descriptions here. The first Beast rises from of the sea. The word θάλασσα points at the Beast's evil character, as the sea (which in this context is to be considered as synonymous with the ἄβυσσος) is a reservoir of evil and chaos, where anti-godly powers are gathering; when the beast rises from this place, it is clear that he is on Satan's side[108]. The description has borrowed heavily from the four beasts in Dan. 7, which represent political entities, but the religious aspect of blasphemy is present too (vv. 1-2a). The Dragon (Satan[109]) equips the Beast with extensive power and authority[110]. So, the Beast has a spe-

[106] Cf. R.H. CHARLES, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John* (International Critical Commentary), Edinburgh 1920, p. II 86; BEALE, *o.c.* (n. 102), p. 48.

[107] Cf. the task of the prophet, προφήτης, with whom φάναι πρὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ is not limited to the future either.

[108] PRIGENT, *o.c.* (n. 105), pp. 168, 200; MOUNCE, *o.c.* (n. 42), pp. 249-250; BEALE, *o.c.* (n. 102), p. 684.

[109] Rev. 20.2.

[110] About the authority which Satan still holds: see R. YATES, *The Antichrist*, in *Evangelical Quarterly* 46 (1974), pp. 42-50 (p. 47). KRAFT, *o.c.* (n. 104), pp. 175, 177, sees too much of a distinction between this verse and the other Biblical data. Cf. MOUNCE, *o.c.* (n. 42), p. 254; CAIRD, *o.c.* (n. 71), p. 163. LIETAERT

cial relationship with Satan, but, of course, without identification (v. 2b). One of the seven heads of the Beast is mortally wounded[111], but it is healed. Because of this, people worship the Beast as a divine being[112] (vv. 3-4). God allows the Beast to speak and act blasphemously for a limited time[113]. God's being[114], his presence on earth[115], and his believers and angels[116] are slandered, which contributes to the Beast's deceiving[117]. The Beast terribly persecutes the believers[118] and has power over the whole earth. All people worship the Beast[119], except those who live because of the death of the Lamb, Jesus Christ[120]. His sacrificial death was determined from the creation of the world[121] (vv. 5-8). It is important that we understand this (vv. 9-10)[122].

PEERBOLTE, *o.c.* (n. 81), pp. 166-168, 215-216, actually argues that Satan did this because he was thrown out of heaven himself (12.9,13; cf. Lk. 10.18): the actions of the Beast show that Christ has conquered.

[111] BEALE, *o.c.* (n. 102), pp. 687-688 supposes: by God.

[112] Cf. Ex. 15.11; Ps. 35.10; Ps. 113.5; Isa. 44.7. Cf. PRIGENT, *o.c.* (n. 105), p. 204; KRAFT, *o.c.* (n. 104), p. 176.

[113] God limits the time that this evil is tolerated: PRIGENT, *o.c.* (n. 105), p. 204; MOUNCE, *o.c.* (n. 42), pp. 221, 254 (where Mounce also states that ἤνοιξεν τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ indicates speaking for a (relatively) long time); BEALE, *o.c.* (n. 102), p. 695.

[114] MOUNCE, *o.c.* (n. 42), p. 255; cf. BEALE, *o.c.* (n. 102), p. 696: "'blasphemy' enhances the idea of deception, since blasphemy involves slandering or defaming the name of the true God".

[115] The word σκηνή does not indicate a temporary dwelling, but has been chosen for its similarity in sound with שכנה (PRIGENT, *o.c.* (n. 105), p. 205).

[116] PRIGENT, *o.c.* (n. 105), p. 205.

[117] BEALE, *o.c.* (n. 102), p. 696.

[118] LADD, *o.c.* (n. 105), p. 180; C. BRÜTSCH, *Clarté de l'Apocalypse*, Genève 1966[5], p. 225.

[119] According to PRIGENT, *o.c.* (n. 105), pp. 205-206, and KRAFT, *o.c.* (n. 104), p. 177: the Dragon (because of αὐτόν, masculine); however cf. v. 14, where the masculine rel. pron. is used with θηρίον as antecedent.

[120] This equation appears from Rev. 5. Josephine Massyngberde FORD, *Revelation* (Anchor Bible), Garden City 1975, p. 223, points out that there is a similarity between the Lamb and the Son of Man in Dan. 7.

[121] On first thoughts ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου seems to go with τοῦ ἀρνίου τοῦ ἐσφαγμένου and not with γέγραπται τὸ ὄνομα. There is no reason not to go by this first impression (cf. Acts 2.23; I Pet. 1.20), although John definitely does not deny the other combination (see 17.8). See also PRIGENT, *o.c.* (n. 105), p. 206; CAIRD, *o.c.* (n. 71), p. 168; MOUNCE, *o.c.* (n. 42), p. 256; BEALE, *o.c.* (n. 102), pp. 702-703.

[122] A discussion of the text and meaning of v. 10 can be omitted, as this verse has little to do with the core of our subject. See e.g. PRIGENT, *o.c.* (n. 105), p. 207.

Viewed from a contemporary-historical interpretation[123] this must be referring to the asiarchs that travelled the sea from Rome once a year and landed at Ephesus. They represent the Roman Empire[124]. A number of elements belong to the standard description in Daniel and cannot be interpreted historically[125], but the seven heads point at the seven important emperors the Roman Empire had known until the time of edition, or were expected soon by the writer[126]. According to this interpretation, the mortally wounded head indicates Nero, who had died, but who was expected to revive as *Nero redivivus*[127]. However, one may remark that it

[123] However, cf. J. ERNST, *Die eschatologischen Gegenspieler in den Schriften des Neuen Testaments* (Biblische Untersuchungen 3), Regensburg 1967, p. 140: "Alle zeitgeschichtlichen Deutungen ... sind reine Rateversuche."

[124] The Hebrew ים not only means "sea", but also "West". KRAFT, *o.c.* (n. 104), p. 175; FORD, *o.c.* (n. 120), p. 218; CAIRD, *o.c.* (n. 71), p. 162.

[125] KRAFT, *o.c.* (n. 105), p. 177.

[126] But which emperors are discussed here? And before that: whom should we consider to be the first emperor? According to E. LIPIŃSKI, *L'Apocalypse et le martyre de Jean à Jérusalem*, in *Novum Testamentum* 11 (1969), pp. 225-232 (pp. 226-227), the Jews regarded Julius Caesar as the first emperor. Formally, Augustus is the first emperor. Christian authors want to start counting after Christ's death; in that case Caligula (37-41) is the first emperor (PRIGENT, *o.c.* (n. 105), pp. 254-255). We can omit from our count those emperors who had not been declared to be divine by the Senate (CAIRD, *o.c.* (n. 71), pp. 163, 218; Caird is against this solution, as it means that Caligula and Nero cannot be eliminated by John), or the emperors of the year of four Caesars (68-69): Galba, Otho and Vitellius (according to FORD, *o.c.* (n. 120), p. 290; MOUNCE, *o.c.* (n. 42), pp. 314-315, is against this solution because Jewish authors do include these three emperors in their count). Of course the whole issue is dismissed if we assume, with YATES, *o.c.* (n. 110), p. 47; MOUNCE, *o.c.*, p. 250 (somewhat different on pp. 315-316); and CAIRD, *o.c.*, p. 218, that the seven heads form the *symbol* of a full global rule, enmity or series of emperors (respectively). Pagan authors also classify Caligula and Nero as enemies of God (SPEYER, *Gottesfeind*, in: *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* XI, Stuttgart 1981, coll. 996-1043 (col. 1017)).

[127] See e.g. MOUNCE, *o.c.* (n. 42), pp. 252-253; B. RIGAUX, *L'Antéchrist et l'Opposition au Royaume Messianique dans l'Ancien et le Nouveau Testament* (Universitas Catholica Lovaniensis. Dissertationes ad gradum magistri in Facultate Theologiae consequendum conscriptae 2.24), Gembloux – Paris 1932, pp. 350-352. This theory is debatable: it is not very probable that John would base himself on a pagan myth (although RIGAUX, *o.c.*, p. 353, rightly remarks that the fact that he *used* the legend does not imply he *believed* it); the alternation between "head" and "Beast" pleads against; the Fathers do not mention it – except Victorinus of Pettau (W. BOUSSET, *Der Antichrist in der Überlieferung des Judentums, des neuen Testaments und der alten Kirche. Ein Beitrag zur Auslegung der*

is not the *head*, but the *Beast* that is healed. This problem can be solved by stating that Nero's death heralds a period of civil war, which could have been the end of the Roman Empire[128]. In that case, the wound in his head (an emperor) can be equated to a wound to the Beast (the Roman Empire) as is done further on in this chapter[129]. Asia was happy with the Pax Romana and was therefore easily inclined to deify and worship the emperor[130].

The second Beast described in this chapter (vv. 11-18) rises from the earth. It looks like the Lamb, Christ, but actually represents the Dragon, Satan, and speaks like him (so again: special relationship, but no identity). It is completely oriented to the first Beast (vv. 11-12)[131]. It tempts people by signs and wonders[132], and persuades them to erect a statue for[133] the first Beast. God allows

Apocalypse, Göttingen 1895, p. 52), but it is hazardous to draw systematic conclusions from Victorinus' work (cf. below); neither do they mention that John has been proved wrong. On the other hand we have to admit that Nero was particularly evil and that a special role may be reserved for him; in that case the Beast has appeared in the past as (among others) Nero, is not there now, but will come back as an eschatological Antichrist. This is actually how CHARLES, *o.c.* (n. 106), p. II 83, sees it: "As soon, however, as the hope of the return of the living Nero could no longer be entertained, the way was prepared for this transformation of the myth. The living Nero was no longer expected, but Nero restored to life from the abyss". This means then, that there is a "*Fusion of the Antichrist myth with that of Nero redivivus*". To conclude we may say that the *Nero redivivus* theory seems appealing, but cannot solve the whole problem. On the other hand an interpretation without this theory will miss some historical colouring. Therefore the most sensible thing to do is to keep the theory as a background element, and to assume that John was thinking of the coming of the Antichrist whose image somewhat resembles Nero, but that John did not expect the personal return of Nero.

[128] PRIGENT, *o.c.* (n. 105), p. 203; MOUNCE, *o.c.* (n. 42), pp. 253, 259; CAIRD, *o.c.* (n. 71), p. 164.

[129] V. 12.

[130] PRIGENT, *o.c.* (n. 105), p. 202; CAIRD, *o.c.* (n. 71), p. 166.

[131] Some want to see an anti-trinity in this, but it would be strange if this was one of the clearest texts on a divine Trinity (YATES, *o.c.* (n. 110), p. 46; for other objections see PRIGENT, *o.c.* (n. 105), p. 208 n. 23).

[132] Making fire come down from heaven is a divine privilege. According to KRAFT, *o.c.* (n. 104), p. 180, it was worded in this way because God was originally a god of thunder. *If* this is true, was it still known at the time of edition of Revelation?

[133] Not "of" in this verse (as FORD, *o.c.* (n. 120), p. 214, rightly remarks; against PRIGENT, *o.c.* (n. 105), p. 199).

the second Beast to animate the statue[134]. Whoever does not worship the statue is killed[135]. These aspects point to a religious activity (vv. 13-15). All[136] are being marked on their right hand[137] and forehead and whoever does not carry the mark is boycotted; this points to a political activity of the Beast. The number of the Beast is the number of a man. From this may be inferred that it indicates a human being[138]. Calculating the number of the Beast signifies wisdom: ἑξακόσιοι ἑξήκοντα ἕξ. In figures it is written χξς', 666[139]. I believe I may also put forward the following hypothesis:

[134] The animation of images also occurred during the first century: PRIGENT, *o.c.* (n. 105), pp. 211-212; KRAFT, *o.c.* (n. 104), p. 181; MOUNCE, *o.c.* (n. 42), p. 261.

[135] This much is clear, although the structure of v. 15 is unclear. See also MOUNCE, *o.c.* (n. 42), p. 261.

[136] This is what the meristic pairs amount to.

[137] E.A. JUDGE, *The Mark of the Beast, Revelation 13:16*, in *Tyndale Bulletin* 42 (1991), pp. 158-160 (p. 158), suspects that this indicates the wrists, but as a rule, stamps are placed on the back of the hand. Therefore the comparison with the *tefillin* is unjustified.

[138] Differently: BEALE, *o.c.* (n. 102), pp. 723-724.

[139] The attempts to decipher this ultra-short code can be divided into three categories: Gnostic, Gematric and Symbolic.

Gnostic 666 is the triangular number – n(n+1)/2 – of 36, and 36 is the triangular number of 8. This points to the ogdoad, the Wisdom in the gnosis (the ח of חכמה has the numerical value of 8), as is confirmed by the first words of the verse (Ὧδε ἡ σοφία ἐστίν). Objections: the chances of a Gnostic element in John are slim (cf. E.M. YAMAUCHI, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism. A Survey of the Proposed Evidences*, Grand Rapids 1983²), and the ogdoad has a positive connotation, which is not the case for the number 666. (See also PRIGENT, *o.c.* (n. 105), p. 214; FORD, *o.c.* (n. 120), p. 216; CAIRD, *o.c.* (n. 71), p. 176; A.J. VISSER, *De Openbaring van Johannes* (Prediking van het Nieuwe Testament), Nijkerk 1965, p. 141.)

Gematric (derived from the word נ(י)מטריא; according to M. JASTROW, *A Dictionary from the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature*, New York – Berlin – London 1926, s.v., from the Greek γραμματεῖον, according to G.H. DALMAN, *Aramäisches-Neuhebräisches Handwörterbuch zu Targum, Talmud und Midrash*, Frankfurt am Main 1922², s.v., and F. DORNSEIFF, *Das Alphabet in Mystik und Magie* (ΣΤΟΙΧΕΙΑ 7), p. 91 n. 1, from γεωμετρία, which seems more probable) This method makes use of the numerical value of letters, as exists in the Greek (the Greek term is ἰσοψηφία) and Hebrew alphabets, and is used mainly in contemporary-historical exegesis (see therefore further in this paragraph). For gematria in general see DORNSEIFF, *o.c.*, pp. 91-118.

Symbolic The number 6 indicates imperfection; so 666 is "perfect" imperfection; the numerical value 888 for Ἰησοῦς in Sib.Or. 1.324-331 is quoted,

The second Beast represents the Serpent[140], rendered by the letter ξ, which reminds of the snake because of its shape[141] and its sound, in a figure that reminds of Christ, rendered by the letters $\overline{\text{XC}}$, the contraction of the *nomen sacrum* Χριστός[142]. The number χξς'

which is said to indicate divine perfection. See also PRIGENT, *o.c.* (n. 105), pp. 216-217.

[140] Also to BOUSSET, *o.c.* (n. 127), pp. 132-134, the serpent is the sign of the Antichrist. On one hand he elaborates this thought too little in relation to this passage, on the other hand he makes the transfer from this sign to the Dragon myth too readily.

[141] Also in uncials: see 𝔓[47] (K. ALAND & Barbara ALAND, *Der Text des Neuen Testaments. Einführung in die wissenschaftlichen Aufgaben sowie in Theorie und Praxis der modernen Textkritik*, Stuttgart 1982, p. 100)!

[142] One could object that the *C* of 6 is from a different origin from the *C* of Χριστός – the sixth letter in the Phoenician alphabet, the waw, had no function in standard-Greek and was only preserved as a number; the form was *F* (hence the name "digamma"), but also *ſ* (just the top of the *F*) and even *C* (W. LARFELD, *Handbuch der griechischen Epigraphik II. Die attischen Inschriften*, Leipzig 1902, p. 347; V. GARDTHAUSEN, *Die Schrift, Unterschriften und Chronologie im Altertum und im byzantinischen Mittelalter*, Leipzig 1913², p. 367); during the period between 50 and 120 AD the sigma could also take the forms *ſ* and *C* (LARFELD, *o.c.*, p. 489). The end-sigma (ς) only appeared later (1273 AD, according to DORNSEIFF, *o.c.* (n. 139), p. 106; this was an attempt to introduce an aesthetically responsible way of separating words) and *this* sign is used for the number. The *C* (6) and the *C* (sigma) definitely look very much alike: see specifically 𝔓[47] (ALAND & ALAND, *o.c.* (n. 141), p. 100). Admittedly this third century papyrus is not the autograph, but what is possible here must also have been possible before. Actually, there is a strong tradition (Majority Text; cf. IRENAEUS, *Adversus haereses* V.30.1) that this number is expressed in *digits*, although ℵ and A give the number in *letters*.

The contractions used for the holy names are not late, but originated under Jewish influence (DORNSEIFF, *o.c.*, pp. 145-146).

The idea of this explanation can be found with E.W. BULLINGER, *The Apocalypse or "The Day of the Lord"*, London 1909², p. 441 ("The first and last of these three letters are the abbreviation of the word 'Christ', being the first and last letters of the word *Christos*. So that, when we have the ξ, like a crooked serpent, put between them, we see a fitting symbol of Satan's Messiah – the Anti-Christ.") He does not work this out, however, and is even misinformed about the origin and name of the ς.

This explanation closely resembles that of F.W. FARRAR, *The Early Days of Christianity II*, London – Paris – New York 1882, p. 295, who states that the χ indicates Christ, the ξ the serpent, and the ς the cross (σταυρός). Farrar wrongly bases his theory on the name "sti" or "stigma" for the ς; this name only appeared during the time of the minuscules, when a ligature of the σ and the τ had occurred; on the basis of this late ligature people also started to call the digit by this name (GARDTHAUSEN, *o.c.*, p. 367). Actually, FARRAR, *o.c.*, p. 296, combines the above-mentioned theory with the theory "666 = נרון קסר".

therefore points at the Antichrist, Christ's opponent, who bears the authority of Satan, the old Serpent (20.2). This interpretation certainly does not deny that the number 666 can also be the symbol of "complete" human imperfection (vv. 16-18).

Viewed from a contemporary-historical interpretation the prophecy is about the body of priests in the country of Asia itself, which encouraged emperor worship. The animation of idols by means of tricks or possibly magic powers was not uncommon[143]. Others think that ἡ γῆ is הארץ and think of someone who was a "home product": a Jew who cooperated with Rome, e.g. Flavius Josephus[144]. Although criminals and followers of certain religions were branded[145], χάραγμα is probably to be interpreted as coinage. The coins carried the image of the emperor and it is impossible to buy or sell without the use of coins[146]. The number points at Nero, whose return is expected, because the numerical value of קסר נרון is six hundred and sixty six[147].

[143] PRIGENT, *o.c.* (n. 105), pp. 208-212; CAIRD, *o.c.* (n. 71), p. 171; KRAFT, *o.c.* (n. 104), p. 181.

[144] FORD, *o.c.* (n. 120), pp. 213, 223-224, 227-230. PRIGENT, *o.c.* (n. 105), p. 208 n. 22, also mentions this possibility.

[145] See J. YSEBAERT, *Greek Baptismal Terminology. Its Origins and Early Development* (Graecitas christianorum primaeva 1), Nijmegen 1962, pp. 199-204. For dedication to a specific god, see HERODOTUS, *Historiae* II 113 (text according to J.J.E. HONDIUS – J.A. SCHUURSMA, *Herodotus. Historiën*, Groningen – Djakarta 1956[5]): Ἦν δὲ ... Ἡρακλέος ἱρόν, ἐς τὸ ἢν καταφυγὼν οἰκέτης ... ἐπιβάληται στίγματα ἱρά, ἑωυτὸν διδοὺς τῷ θεῷ, οὐκ ἔξεστι τούτου ἅψασθαι. ("There was a temple of Hercules, and if a slave has fled there, administering the holy 'stigmata' to himself and dedicating himself to the god, then it is forbidden to touch him."). One could wonder whether the loyalty was genuine here. Also in III Macc. 2.29 (text according to R. HANHART, *Maccabaeorum libri I-IV. Fasc. III. Maccabaeorum liber III* (Septuaginta. Vetus Testamentum Graecum. Auctoritate Societatis Litterarum Gottingensis editum 9), Göttingen 1960): τούς τε ἀπογραφομένους χαράσσεσθαι ... παρασήμῳ Διονύσου κισσοφύλλῳ ("... that the registered ones would be branded ... with the ivy leaf, the mark of Dionysus") one may wonder whether it happened voluntarily, but we must conclude that it did under normal circumstances; cf. M. HADAS, *The Third and Fourth Books of Maccabees*, New York 1953, pp. 17-18 and ad loc.

[146] E.g. CAIRD, *o.c.* (n. 71), p. 173. For a very hypothetical reconstruction, see JUDGE, *o.c.* (n. 137), pp. 159-160. According to PRIGENT, *o.c.* (n. 105), p. 213, this is *not* about an existing situation.

[147] Objections to this interpretations have been made. This solution was not mentioned by the Fathers. It is improbable that John, who always works entirely from the Greek (1.8; 21.6: Ἐγώ εἰμι τὸ ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὦ; see also 9.11 and 16.16,

In the last chapters of Revelation we read that the Beast and the kings of the earth and their armies will fight against Christ[148] and his army. Several data about the Beast and the False Prophet[149] clearly point to chapter 13. Eventually both are captured without any struggle[150], and punished by being thrown into the pool of fire which[151] burns with sulphur[152]. They meet their end in the same way as Satan, but the Beast is not Satan. All this indicates that with this passage we have arrived at the end of time (but possibly before the Millennium) (19.19-20; 20.10).

The contemporary-historical exegesis does not find any clues for the data found only here.

where no knowledge of Hebrew is assumed) would suddenly make use of Hebrew here. (However, see G. BOHAK, *Greek-Hebrew Gematrias in* 3 Baruch *and in Revelation*, in *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 7 (1990), pp. 119-121; FARRAR, *o.c.* (n. 142), p. 296 n. 1.) Furthermore, this Hebrew text was written defectively (קסר instead of קיסר). This last objection is no longer so stringent since the discovery of an Aramaic document from Murabba'ât (Mur 18.1): it contains the same defective writing ([שנ]ת תרתין לנרון קסר) ("in the second year of emperor Nero"), although honesty compels us to say that the ס is only legible with some difficulty and the ר is barely legible. An advantage of this interpretation is that it explains the reading variant 616 (χις') which can hardly be a writing error: it is the letter value of קסר נרו, the transcription of the Latin form "Nero" instead of the Greek form Νέρων. IRENAEUS, *Adversus haereses* V.30.1, however witnesses that it definitely concerns the number 666 in Greek script. See also: R.H. CHARLES, *The Ascension of Isaiah*, London 1900, p. lxvi n. 1; ID., *Studies in the Apocalypse*, Edinburgh 1913, pp. 47-48; VAN DER WESTHUIZEN, *o.c.* (n. 49), pp. 109-110; RIGAUX, *o.c.* (n. 127), pp. 356-358; PRIGENT, *o.c.* (n. 105), pp. 214-216; MOUNCE, *o.c.* (n. 42), pp. 264-265. Of course, the contemporary-historical interpretation has also put forward other candidates, but the discussion in the text is limited to the one mentioned most often: Nero. The interpretation Καῖσαρ θεός (A. DEISSMANN, *Licht vom Osten. Das Neue Testament und die neuentdeckten Texte der hellenistisch-römischen Welt*, Tübingen 1909[2-3], p. 208 n. 3), of which the numerical value is 616, has the advantage of being more prudent, because no individual emperor is mentioned, but it has the disadvantage of being based on an inferior reading.

[148] MOUNCE, *o.c.* (n. 42), p. 349.

[149] Can be equalled to the second Beast; see above.

[150] PRIGENT, *o.c.* (n. 105), pp. 297, 299; LADD, *o.c.* (n. 105), p. 257; MOUNCE, *o.c.* (n. 42), p. 349. Cf. II Thess. 2.8 (see above).

[151] The gender matches the pool, the case matches the fire.

[152] Θεῖον, "sulphur", is found in free form in the Dead See area. When in contact with oxygen it burns up, producing a very high temperature and smelling terribly (MOUNCE, *o.c.* (n. 42), p. 350).

Conclusion

In Dan. 11 we meet already many elements of what was later to be known as the Antichrist. The same is true for II Thess. 2.1-12, although there the *word* "Antichrist" is not used either (but: "man of lawlessness").

On the other hand, we have to consider Jesus' Eschatological Discourse mainly as background to the theme.

Our research into the Epistles of John has led to very little. Although in the Bible only these texts mention the word 'Αντίχριστος, it is yet very unclear what this term actually means. It has emerged, however, that John pays more attention to the forerunners of the Antichrist, but that he assumes that an eschatological Antichrist is still to be expected.

The exegesis of Revelation has to take different models of explanation into consideration. We need to take into account not only the time in which John wrote, but also the end times he was looking forward to. Besides, we should realise that the different pictures that are presented not always follow each other at the same chronological distance. In the same way as with a slide presentation, a second picture of the same situation may be shown[153]. This leads us to conclude that in the two beasts of chapter 13 two aspects of the same Antichrist are being put forward. We also have to conclude that the False Prophet represents this second, particularly religious aspect of the Antichrist[154]. It makes sense, therefore, that the False Prophet is mentioned together with the Beast in several places and

[153] Of course, some chronological indications do appear and roughly speaking a succession of paragraphs does exist.

[154] Cf. PRIGENT, *o.c.* (n. 105), p. 199 ("elle ne semble guère se distinguer de la précédente") and p. 298 ("la bête et son alter ego le faux prophète"). However, an explanation must be found as to how the two beasts come from two different places. In the futuristic interpretation "sea" and "land" do not necessarily indicate geographical entities. A non-geographical explanation for "sea" has already been given. For "land" one could keep in mind that the Antichrist makes use of native elements for his religious politics.

Interestingly, KRAFT, *o.c.* (n. 104), p. 180, states that the second Beast resembles the Lamb, because it can be equalled to the False Prophet and because the Lamb is also a prophetic figure; he does not underpin his argument with a strong intrinsic basis. Cf. STRECKER, *o.c.* (n. 69), p. 343.

that they disappear from the scene together (16.13; 19.20; 20.10)[155].

This means that different figures are being pointed out to which we must pay attention in our study of the Antichrist theme: archdeceiver, tyrant, false god and man of lawlessness, beast, false prophet. However, the Antichrist has to be differentiated from Satan c.q. Belial.

After the investigation of these texts of the Old Testament and the New Testament, we may conclude that many elements of the Antichrist theme are already present, religious elements as well as political and military elements. Nevertheless, the image is not quite systematic yet. Now I want to explore how the Fathers have built on these data. On the one hand, this research will be limited to the writings of the Apostolic Fathers[156] and the Church Fathers[157], because we wish to find out what was said about the Antichrist in the mainstream of the Church during the early Christian period and how it was developed[158]. On the other hand, this research will be limited to those texts that shed light on the very *nature* of the Antichrist. This should allow us to determine if the Fathers have constructed a systematic image (and if so, which one) in basing themselves on the biblical data (or, on the contrary, that they have deviated from these).

[155] Bousset proves not to have been wrong when in his 1906 commentary he stated that the two different figures of the first and the second Beast form two facets of one human God-opposer. However, his conclusion that there is a ***triple*** Antichrist, constituting the two Beasts and the Dragon, is wrong (W. BOUSSET, *Die Offenbarung Johannis* (Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neuen Testament), Göttingen 1906[6], pp. 377-378 (see also p. 328); ID., *o.c.* (n. 127), pp. 123-124).

[156] There is no fixed list of "Apostolic Fathers". I consider the following writings to belong to this group: I Clement, II Clement, Epistle of Barnabas, Epistle of Ignatius, Epistle of Polycarp, Martyrdom of Polycarp, Shepherd of Hermas, Didache, Papias. (See K. BIHLMEYER, *Die apostolischen Väter*, Tübingen 1956[2], pp. VII-IX; J.B. LIGHTFOOT – J.R. HARMER, *The Apostolic Fathers*, London 1891, pp. [vii-viii]).

[157] See J. QUASTEN, *Patrology I. The Beginnings of Patristic Literature*, Utrecht – Brussel 1950, pp. 9-10, for the term "Church Father". There is no fixed list for this category either.

[158] For this reason we will not discuss the New Testament Apocrypha, Gnostic writings, etc.

III. The Writings Of The Fathers

In the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, the word Antichrist appears only in the *Epistle of Polycarp*. Much more was written about the Antichrist by the Church Fathers.

Polycarp

Polycarp (69-155)[159] was the only Apostolic Father who used the term ἀντίχριστος[160]. He did so in a summary of I Jn. 4.3 and II Jn. 7, in the context of a reaction against docetism and gnosticism[161]: Πᾶς γάρ, ὃς ἂν μὴ ὁμολογῇ, Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθέναι, ἀντίχριστός ἐστιν. (For whosoever does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, is an antichrist.) He does not move on by giving a definition of the Antichrist, but he does say, a bit further on: οὗτος πρωτότοκός ἐστι τοῦ σατανᾶ (he is the firstborn of Satan).

We may conclude from this that Polycarp viewed the Antichrist as a different person from Satan (πρωτότοκος ... τοῦ σατανᾶ). However, it is unclear whether Polycarp thought of a collective term (Πᾶς ... ὅς) or of a possibly eschatological individual (since there can only be one πρωτότοκος).

Irenaeus of Lyons

Irenaeus Lugdunensis (140 - after 190) speaks about the Antichrist in the fifth book of *Adversus haereses*, his main work, which has been preserved only partly in Greek, but fully in its Latin

[159] The "86 years" have to be applied to the whole of his life (J.B. Bauer, *Die Polykarpbriefe* (Kommentar zu den Apostolischen Vätern 5), Göttingen 1995, p. 11). For the problem of the year of his death, see Bihlmeyer, *o.c.* (n. 156), p. XLII; W.R. Schoedel, *Polycarp of Smyrna and Ignatius of Antioch*, in: W. Haase (Ed.), *Religion (Vorkonstantinisches Christentum: Apostolische Väter und Apologeten)* (ANRW II 27.1), Berlin – New York 1993, pp. 272-349 (pp. 354-355); B. Dehandschutter, *The Martyrium Polycarpi: a Century of Research*, in: W. Haase (Ed.), *o.c.*, pp. 485-522 (pp. 497-501).

[160] H. Kraft, *Clavis patrum apostolicorum*, München 1963, p. 45.

[161] Ep. Polyc. 7.1 (text according to Bihlmeyer, *o.c.* (n. 156)). Cf. Bauer, *o.c.* (n. 159), pp. 57-59.

translation[162]. He writes[163]: "Ille [Antichristus] enim omnem suscipiens diaboli virtutem veniet ... [quasi rex] impius et injustus et sine lege, quasi apostata et iniquus et homicida, quasi latro, diabolicam apostasiam in se recapitulans, et idola quidem deponens ad suadendum quod ipse sit Deus, ..." (For that [Antichrist] will come, taking upon himself all the power of the devil, ... [as an] impious, unjust and lawless [king], as an apostate, an iniquitous and murderous man, as a robber, epitomizing satanic apostasy, even casting aside the idols to convince (men) that he himself is God.) After this he refers to II Thess. 2.3b-4.

Clearly a close link exists between the Antichrist and Satan. From "suscipiens" we must, however, conclude that the two are not identical[164]. The reference to II Thess. 2.3b ("homo peccati") proves his humanity. According to Irenaeus, the most important characteristics of the Antichrist are lawlessness, apostasy, the desire to be worshipped as god, and the lack of respect for human lives. From these characteristics, and definitely from the word "rex", one may conclude that Irenaeus viewed the Antichrist in the first place as a political celebrity, not as a religious personage.

Tertullian

Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus (before 160 – after 220) wrote about the Antichrist in *De praescriptione haereticorum*, which dates from 203[165]. He seems to assume a large amount of

[162] B. ALTANER – A. STUIBER, *Patrologie. Leben, Schriften und Lehre der Kirchenväter*, Freiburg im Breisgau 1978[8], pp. 110-117, 570-572.

[163] *Adversus haereses* V.25.1 (text according to A. ROUSSEAU – L. DOUTRELEAU – C. MERCIER, *Irénée de Lyon. Contre les hérésies V* (Sources Chrétiennes 153), Paris 1969). The words between square brackets can be completed from the surrounding text without any problem.

[164] From "recapitulans" it could be concluded that even Satan himself will throw all his bad qualities into the fray. The word clearly has a christological connotation (see Eph. 1.10 and F. SBAFFONI, *Testi sull'Anticristo. Secoli I-II* (Biblioteca Patristica 20), Firenze 1992, pp. 166-167).

[165] Eva SCHULZ-FLÜGEL, *Tertullian*, in: S. DÖPP – W. GEERLINGS (Edd.), *Lexikon der antiken christlichen Literatur*, Freiburg – Basel – Wien 1999[2], pp. 582-587 (pp. 582-583); T.D. BARNES, *Tertullian. A Historical and Literary Study*, Oxford 1985[2], p. 55 (who, however, supposes a much shorter life: 170-213 (pp. 55-59)). Not everyone would allow Tertullian the title "Church Father", because of his Montanism. For an apology, see D. RANKIN, *Tertullian and the Church*, Cambridge 1995, p. 207 ("Christian Father of North Africa") and passim.

antichrists, as he writes[166]: "Qui antichristi, interim et semper, nisi Christi rebelles?" (Who are antichrists, time and again, except the rebels against Christ?) From the next paragraph, immediately following this, it appears however, that these are only an "advance"[167]: "Hoc erunt haereses, non minus nouarum doctrinarum peruersitate ecclesiam lacessentes, quam tunc antichristus persecutionum atrocitate persequetur." (These will be the heresies, which will not threaten the church any less through the wrongness of new teachings than when the Antichrist will persecute her with atrocious persecutions.) Thus, he assumes only one eschatological Antichrist. Apart from this relationship between "many antichrists" and "one Antichrist" we find very few elements in the writings of Tertullian[168].

Hippolytus of Rome

Around 200, Hippolytus (before 170 - 235) wrote a work which dealt specifically with the Antichrist (with many digressions): *Ἀπόδειξις ἐκ τῶν ἁγίων γραφῶν περὶ Χριστοῦ καὶ περὶ τοῦ ἀντιχρίστου*, or in Latin: *De Antichristo*. A few years later he wrote the first (extant) commentary in church history, a commentary on Daniel[169].

[166] *De praescriptione haereticorum* IV 4 (text according to R.F. REFOULÉ – P. DE LABRIOLLE, *Tertullien. Traité de la prescription contre les hérétiques* (Sources Chrétiennes 46), Paris 1957). Cf. *Adversus Praxean* 31 (text according to I. SCARPAT, *Q. Septimii Florentis Tertulliani Adversus Praxean* (Corona Patrum 12), Augustae Taurinorum 1985): "antichristi qui negant Patrem et Filium".

[167] *De praescriptione haereticorum* IV 5. Cf. *Adversus Marcionem* V 16.4: "praecursores antichristi spiritus" (with reference to I John 4.1-3).

[168] For Tertullian's polemical use of "Antichrist" against heretics, see Ilona OPELT, *Die Polemik in der christlichen lateinischen Literatur von Tertullian bis Augustin* (Bibliothek der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft NS 2.63), Heidelberg 1980, pp. 31, 50, 63.

[169] ALTANER – STUIBER, *o.c.* (n. 162), pp. 164-167; H. ACHELIS, *Hippolyt's kleinere exegetische und homiletische Schriften* (Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller 1.2), Leipzig 1897, p. [III]. For the time being, we will consider him as one single person (cf. M. GEERARD – J. NORET, *Clavis Patrum Graecorum. Supplementum*, Turnhout 1998, p. 43: "Repetere licet: adhuc sub iudice lis est."; pace A. BRENT, *Hippolytus and the Roman Church in the Third Century. Communities in Tension before the Emergence of a Monarch-Bishop* (Sup. to Vigiliae Christianae 31), Leiden 1995).

Hippolytus expects one single eschatological Antichrist, since he asks[170]: τίς ... ἡ τοῦ ἀντιχρίστου παρουσία; (How (will) the coming of the Antichrist (be)?) He is definitely to be human[171]: ἐν σχήματι ἀνθρώπου ἐλεύσεται (He will come in the form of a man.) And more specifically: ἐκ τῆς τοῦ Δὰν φυλῆς ὁ ἀντίχριστος γεννηθήσεται (From the tribe of Dan the Antichrist will spring)[172]. Yet there is a special relationship with Satan, because Hippolytus calls him[173] υἱὸς τοῦ διαβόλου (son of the devil) and υἱὸς ὢν τοῦ διαβόλου καὶ σκεῦος τοῦ σατανᾶ (He is a son of the devil and an instrument of Satan.) To Bousset, the aforementioned passages are proof that Hippolytus saw a closer relationship between the Antichrist and Satan than the other Church Fathers did. He says that Hippolytus viewed the Antichrist not as identical to Satan, but as "der inkorporierte Satan"[174]. Apparently there are three possibilities: an "eigentliche Identifikation", "der inkorporierte Satan" and the situation "eines von satanischer Energie erfüllten Menschen[175]". Perhaps Bousset is going too far here: the passages quoted do not indicate semi-identification. Even the description "son of ..." does not necessarily indicate a sameness of essence. We refer to the term "Son of David", which does not indicate that the Son is of the same essence as the man David.

According to Hippolytus, the Antichrist's actions will be mainly of a political nature[176]: he will be διὰ τὸ τυραννικὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ βίαιον ... βασιλεὺς ἐπίγειος (in his tyrannical and violent way ... an earthly king) and a τύραννος, βασιλεὺς, κριτὴς δεινός (a tyrant,

[170] *De Antichristo* V (text according to ACHELIS, *o.c.* (n. 169)).

[171] *De Antichristo* VI, XIV.

[172] One could think that Hippolytus mentions this element because he does not want to link the Antichrist's actions to the Roman Empire (cf. G.C. JENKS, *The Origins and Early Development of the Antichrist Myth* (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 59), Berlin – New York 1991, p. 107), but he is mainly concerned with delaying the negative role of the Roman Empire until the End Times, which will come much later: see D.G. DUNBAR, *The Delay of the Parousia in Hippolytus*, in *Vigiliae Christianae* 37 (1983), pp. 313-327 (pp. 315-316, 318, 320-321). According to HILL, *o.c.* (n. 72), pp. 106, 111-113, the *Christian* linking of the *Antichrist* with the tribe of Dan is based on *Jewish* traditions about the *Messiah* coming from that tribe.

[173] *De Antichristo* XV, LVII.

[174] BOUSSET, *o.c.* (n. 127), p. 89 ("the incarnated Satan").

[175] The terms are from BOUSSET, *o.c.* (n. 127), p. 89 ("an actual identification, Satan incarnated, and a man filled with satanic energy").

[176] *De Antichristo* VI, XV, LVII.

a king, a frightful judge). It is also reported that he βασιλεύσας ἄρξεται (will begin to be king). There is however a religious aspect as well, because the Antichrist[177] πέμψει ψευδαποστόλους (will send false apostles). Now ἀποστόλους may still be a political term; the combination with ψευδ- indicates a religious dimension. The most important characteristics of his actions are deceit, injustice and rebellion towards God[178]: φανήσεται ὡς ἀρνίον, ἔνδοθεν λύκος ὤν (He will appear as a lamb, though on the inside he is a wolf.) And: "κριτὴν" μὲν οὖν "ἀδικίας" τὸν μήτε "τὸν θεὸν φοβούμενον μήτε ἄνθρωπον ἐντρεπόμενον" ἀδιστάκτως τὸν ἀντίχριστον λέγει [ὁ εὐαγγελιστής], ὅς ... ἄρξεται καὶ κατὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπαίρεσθαι ([The evangelist] undoubtedly calls the Antichrist "an unrighteous judge", who neither "fears God nor spares a man", and who will even begin to rebel against God.) This rebellion against God also shows from the persecution of the saints: κατὰ πάντα θλίβειν τοὺς ἁγίους θέλων (He desires to oppress the saints in everything.)

Origen

Origen (185-253) speaks about the nature of the Antichrist in his *Commentary on John* (on which he worked for many years, beginning around 233), in the *Contra Celsum* and in his *Commentary on Matthew* (these works date from 248 or slightly later)[179]. At first sight it seems that in *Contra Celsum*, Origen views Christ and the Antichrist as two eternal principles on which people focus[180]: τί οὖν ἄτοπον δύο, ἵν' οὕτως ὀνομάσω, ἀκρότητας, τὴν μὲν τοῦ καλοῦ τὴν δὲ τοῦ ἐναντίου, ἐν ἀνθρώποις γίνεσθαι, ὥστε τὴν μὲν τοῦ καλοῦ ἀκρότητα εἶναι ἐν τῷ κατὰ τὸν Ἰησοῦν νοουμένῳ ἀνθρώπῳ, ἀφ' οὗ ἡ τοσαύτη ἔρρευσε τῷ γένει τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐπιστροφὴ καὶ θεραπεία καὶ βελτίωσις, τὴν δὲ τοῦ ἐναντίου ἐν τῷ

[177] *De Antichristo* VI.

[178] *De Antichristo* VI, LVII, L (respectively).

[179] J.W. TRIGG, *Origen. The Bible and Philosophy in the Third-century Church*, Atlanta 1983, pp. 147-148, 214, 241, 243. For further information, see J. DANIÉLOU, *Origène*, in: *Dictionnaire de la Bible. Supplément* VI, Paris 1960, coll. 884-908. Not according to all does Origen qualify for the title of "Church Father", because of several points of heresy. For an apology, see R.J. DALY, *Origen (ca. 185 – ca. 251)*, in: E. FERGUSON (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, New York – London 1997², pp. 835-837 (p. 836).

[180] *Contra Celsum* VI 45.13-19 (text according to M. BORRET, *Origène. Contre Celse III (Livres V et VI)* (Sources Chrétiennes 147), Paris 1969).

κατὰ τὸν ὀνομαζόμενον Ἀντίχριστον; (Why then is it strange, that two "extremes" – as I call them – exist within people, one of goodness, the other its opposite, so that the extreme of goodness lives in the person who thinks in accord with Jesus, from whom such inclination and healing and improvement emanates towards humanity, while (the extreme) of the opposite (is) in (the person who thinks) in accord with the one who is called Antichrist?) By using the name Ἰησοῦς, Origen stresses the humanity of Jesus Christ[181], which could also have a parallel in the Antichrist. Although this looks like a form of dualism, it should be noted that God remains above it all[182]: Πάντα δὲ τῇ ἑαυτοῦ προγνώσει ἐκπεριλαβὼν ὁ θεὸς καὶ ἰδὼν τὰ περὶ ἀμφοτέρων τούτων ... (After his own foreknowledge God overviews all and sees what is related to both (categories)). Further on, it becomes clear that the Antichrist should not be identified with Satan, as he is[183] υἱὸν τοῦ πονηροῦ δαίμονος καὶ Σατανᾶ καὶ διαβόλου (son of the evil demon, of Satan and of the devil). The next paragraph, in which he speaks about Paul's second Epistle to the Thessalonians, makes clear that Origen does see the Antichrist as someone who is still to come[184]: ἐπιδημήσει (he will come to earth), and not as a constant principle.

We should take into account, however, some other texts. Origen's exegesis of Mt. 24.15 (with reference to Dan. 11.31) gives the impression that the Antichrist is a principle, which is however expressed in (several) individuals[185]: γενικῶς μὲν εἷς Ἀντίχριστος, ὡς τὸ ψεῦδος ἕν· <ε>ἰδικῶς δὲ πολλοὶ καὶ πολλὰ ψευδῆ διδάγματα καὶ δόγματα (Although there is only one Antichrist generically, there are many (antichrists) in terms of manifestation and many deceptive teachings and positions.) And "si autem secundum diversa dogmata mentiuntur, multi sunt qui exsurgunt. hi enim

[181] F. SBAFFONI, *Testi sull'Anticristo. Secolo III* (Biblioteca Patristica 21), Firenze 1992, p. 105.

[182] *Contra Celsum* VI 45.19-21.

[183] *Contra Celsum* VI 45.26.

[184] *Contra Celsum* VI 46.3.

[185] *Commentariorum series* 47, p. 96 ll. 25-28 (This is a fragment from a Catena commentary; text according to E. KLOSTERMANN, *Origenes Werke XI. Origenes Matthäuserklärung II. Die lateinische Übersetzung der Commentariorum Series* (Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller 38), Leipzig 1933; the Latin translation runs as follows: "generaliter enim unus est Antichristus, species autem illius multae") and p. 96 l. 33 – p. 97 l. 2 (In this case, a Greek text is not available.).

sunt Antichristi; et quicunque post eos surrexerint." (If they speak deceptively against several teachings, there are many who arise. These are antichrists, and all those who will have risen after them.) We find the same ideas also in his commentary on John 8.44[186], where his main thesis is (albeit with some qualification): ψεῦδος εἶναι τὸν ἀντίχριστον (that the Antichrist is deceit). The importance of deceit is also stressed in another part of this commentary (on John 13.20), about the Antichrist principle[187]: ὑποκρινόμενον εἶναι ἀλήθειαν καὶ ψευδῶς ἐπαγγελόμενον εἶναι δικαιοσύνην (presenting himself as being truth and deceitfully announcing himself to be justice).

Although we have to be careful, we can conclude from these texts that Origen takes a somewhat original position, in which the Antichrist functions as a kind of principle[188].

Cyprian

Thascius Caecilius Cyprianus (between 200 and 210 - 258)[189] has used the term "Antichrist" several times in his writings. Nevertheless, only one passage shows us something about his view on the nature of the Antichrist, namely in his *Epistle to Fortunatus*[190]: "nos contra in passionibus nostris ... praeferamus ... Deum et Christum diabolo et antichristo". (Let us however in our emotions prefer God and Christ to the devil and the Antichrist.) This comparison shows that the Antichrist should not be identified with Satan, but does have a close relationship with him.

Victorinus of Pettau

The original version (with chiliastic tendencies) of the commentary of Victorinus (230-304) on Revelation (from about 260)

[186] *In Joannem* XX § 174; text according to E. PREUSCHEN, *Origenes Werke IV. Der Johanneskommentar* (Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller 10), Leipzig 1903. Origenes' qualification: the Antichrist has this characteristic, not by nature, but ἐκ ... ἰδίας προαιρέσεως τοιοῦτον γεγενημένον (become such by his own choice).

[187] *In Joannem* XXXII § 214.

[188] Cf. SBAFFONI, *o.c.* (n. 181), pp. 104-107.

[189] ALTANER – STUIBER, *o.c.* (n. 162), pp. 172-174.

[190] *Ad Fortunatum* Incipit 5.VI ll. 94-98 (text according to R. WEBER – M. BÉVENOT, *Sancti Cypriani Episcopi opera* (Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina 3.1), Turnholti 1972).

consists of a whole series of quite short, almost cryptic remarks. It is not without reason that Jerome's version of Victorinus' work is significantly longer. This makes it difficult to get a systematic picture. Maybe Victorinus is not systematic himself[191].

Let us mention step by step what Victorinus writes. With Rev. 12.3b he says that the Antichrist originates from circles within the Roman Empire[192]: "septem reges Romanos, ex quibus et Antichristus" (seven Roman kings, from whom also the Antichrist). This points to a human origin, or to be more precise, to a gentile origin[193]. With Rev. 12.7-9, however, Victorinus says that the Antichrist is cast out of heaven[194]: "iactare Antichristum de caelo, ubi habuit potestatem ascendendi usque ad illud tempus." (The Antichrist was cast out of heaven; until then he had the power to ascend to it.) This commentary with this verse shows that here Victorinus is identifying the Antichrist with Satan, and Satan was allowed accession to heaven all through the era of the Church[195]. This identification might be confirmed by what he says immediately afterwards[196] – "sic Antichristum de inferno suscitari" (Thus the Antichrist is raised up from hell) – but the reference to Paul's "homo peccati" in II Thess. 2.3b can hardly be harmonised with this.

In any case, in Victorinus of Pettau's writings the Antichrist is an eschatological figure; more cannot be concluded from his writings, at least not concerning our subject[197].

[191] K.H. SCHWARTE, *Victorinus von Pettau*, in: DÖPP – GEERLINGS, *o.c.* (n. 165), pp. 627-628 (p. 627); see also I. HAUSSLEITER, *Victorini episcopi Petavionensis opera* (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 49), Vindobonae – Lipsiae 1916, pp. XII-XIV.

[192] *Commentarii in Apocalypsin editio Victorini* (12.3b), p. 110, ll. 7-8 (text according to HAUSSLEITER, *o.c.* (n. 191)).

[193] For a reconstruction (including a presentation of the Antichrist as Nero having become a proselyte), see Martine DULAEY, *Victorin de Poetovio. Premier exégète latin* (Collection des Études Augustiniennes 139), Paris 1993, pp. 199-202, 204.

[194] *Commentarii in Apocalypsin editio Victorini* (12.7-9), p. 114, ll. 10-11.

[195] On the other hand, he (and/or the Antichrist) is still an emanation of hell. In this way, our last two quotations of Victorinus could be harmonised (DULAEY, *o.c.* (n. 193), pp. 198-199).

[196] *Commentarii in Apocalypsin editio Victorini* (12.7-9), p. 114. l. 12.

[197] It is interesting, however, to quote here the thesis of DULAEY, *o.c.* (n. 193), p. 206: "... il n'est pas besoin de faire appel à quelque traité d'eschatologie perdu pour rendre compte des affirmations de Victorin sur l'Antéchrist. L'essentiel de sa doctrine d'un Antéchrist, incarnation satanique mais cependant homme,

Lactantius

Lucius Cae(ci)lius[198] Firmianus Lactantius (about 250-325) has written about (chiliastic) eschatology, including the Antichrist, in the seventh book of his main work, *Divinae Institutiones*. A first edition of this book probably appeared in 311[199].

After painting an eschatological, almost apocalyptic picture (in which a reference to the Sibyl is typical for Lactantius[200]), the Antichrist is mentioned. He is presented as a liar[201]: "se ipse Christum mentietur et contra uerum dimicabit." (He will falsely present himself as the Christ and he will fight against the true one.) There are other crimes as well, but they are not elaborated on[202]: "donec ... captus tandem scelerum suorum luat poenas". (Until, being captured, he will finally undergo punishments for his crimes.)

Athanasius

The Arian conflict forms the framework of the writings of Athanasius (299-373)[203]. In the lexicon of Athanasius' writings two

empereur romain, faux Messie et simulateur [notice the elements of political power, religious power and deceit!], se trouve déjà chez Irénée et Hippolyte ...; le reste vient d'une exégèse personnelle des textes bibliques.".

[198] K.H. SCHWARTE, *Laktanz*, in: DÖPP – GEERLINGS, *o.c.* (n. 165), pp. 387-388 (p. 387) writes Caecilius; the text edition writes Caelius.

[199] K.H. SCHWARTE, *ibid.*

[200] J. QUASTEN, *Patrology II. The Ante-Nicene Literature After Irenaeus*, Utrecht – Brussel 1953, p. 398.

[201] *Divinae institutiones* VII.19.6 (text according to S. BRANDT, *L. Caeli Firmiani Lactanti opera omnia ... I. Divinae institutiones et epitome divinarum institutionum* (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 19.1), Pragae – Vindobonae – Lipsiae 1890).

[202] *Divinae institutiones* VII.19.6.

[203] The exact year of his birth depends on the normal age to become bishop in those days; for this problem, see T.D. BARNES, *Athanasius and Constantius. Theology and Politics in the Constantinian Empire*, Cambridge Mass. – London 1993, pp. 3-10 (who says also about him (on p. 1): "he could not have cut such an impressive figure had he not been conspicuously lacking in the Christian virtues of meekness and humility"); for further information on his life (but *not* on the year of his birth), see M. TETZ, *Athanasiana. Zu Leben und Lehre des Athanasius* (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 78), Berlin – New York 1995, pp. 1-16; for further information on the context in which Athanasius worked, see Annick MARTIN, *Athanase d'Alexandrie et l'Eglise d'Egypte au IV^e siècle (328-373)* (Collection de l'Ecole française de Rome 216), Rome 1996.

meanings of the word 'Αντίχριστος are distinguished: Antichrist in the stricter sense of the word, and metaphorically the heretics[204]. The metaphorical meaning appears most often, in plural. Apparently it is a well-known term, because it is not followed by an explanation. For instance in the *Historia Arianorum* of 358[205]: οἱ μὲν γὰρ πάσχοντες ὡς μαρτύριον ὑπέφερον ... οἱ δὲ θεωροῦντες ἔξωθεν αὐτούς, λοιπὸν δὲ καὶ οἱ Ἕλληνες βλέποντες ὡς ἀντιχρίστους ὡς δημίους κατηρῶντο (Those who were subject to torture, endured it ... those outside [the Christian community] who beheld them, finally also the Greeks who saw them, cursed them as antichrists, as executioners.) This style is continued: the Antichrist is integrated into the Arian conflict, or else the Arian conflict is viewed as its most important forerunner[206]: σπουδὴ μὲν ὑπὲρ τῆς ἀρειανῆς αἱρέσεως, προοίμια δὲ τῆς τοῦ ἀντιχρίστου παρόδου Κωνσταντίου ταύτην προκατασκευάζοντος ἐκείνῳ (On the one hand zeal for the Arian heresy, on the other hand the prelude to the entry of the Antichrist, while Constantius prepares it for him.) Here we have, then, an intermediate text between metaphorical use and strict use. Actually Athanasius regularly[207] uses the word com-

[204] G. MÜLLER, *Lexicon Athanasianum*, Berlin 1944[-1952], s.v.

Athanasius was not the first one to use the word "Antichrist" about those who he considered as heretics (cf. above about Tertullian; OPELT, *o.c.* (n. 168), p. 217, states: "In allen diesen Begriffen sind die Nachfolger weit über nur schwache Ansätze Tertullians hinausgegangen."), nor the only one of his days (cf. EAD., *o.c.*, pp. 88, 97-99, 149, and in general W. TIETZE, *Lucifer von Calaris und die Kirchenpolitik des Constantius II. Zum Konflikt zwischen dem Kaiser Constantius II. und der nikänisch-orthodoxen Opposition (Lucifer von Calaris, Athanasius von Alexandria, Hilarius von Poitiers, Ossius von Córdoba, Liberius von Rom und Eusebius von Vercelli)*, diss. Tübingen 1976).

[205] H.-G. OPITZ, *Athanasius Werke II 1. Die Apologien*, Berlin – Leipzig 1935[-1941], p. 183. The text is from *Historia Arianorum* 62.2 (text according to OPITZ, *o.c.*).

[206] *Historia Arianorum* 46.3. Cf. *Apologia secunda* (*Τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἀπολογητικὸς δεύτερος*, from 357, addressed to Egyptian followers of Athanasius; OPITZ, *o.c.* (n. 205), p. 87) 90.3.

[207] Including *Apologia contra Arianos* 409D2 (J.P. MIGNE, *S. P. N. Athanasii archiepiscopi Alexandrini opera omnia quae exstant* (Patrologia Graeca 25), Parisiis 1884), *Oratio I contra Arianos* 13A10, 25B7 (ID., *o.c.* (Patrologia Graeca 26), Parisiis 1887) and *Vita Antonii monachi* 69.2 (G.J.M. BARTELINK, *Athanase d'Alexandrie. Vie d'Antoine* (Sources Chrétiennes 400), Paris 1994) (which we consider as authentic: see BARTELINK, *o.c.*, p. 35).

bination πρόδρομον τοῦ 'Αντιχρίστου (forerunner of the Antichrist[208]). Clearly it follows that Athanasius assumes a future Antichrist, but apparently has never found the time to elaborate on this idea.

Firmicus Maternus

Iulius Firmicus Maternus (between 300 and 310 - after 360)[209] wrote his only Christian writing, *Liber de errore profanarum religionum*, around 346[210]. In reaction to the description of a Mithras liturgy, he remarks[211], "Habet ergo diabolus christos suos et, quia ipse antichristus est, ..." (Therefore the devil has his own christs, and as he himself is the Antichrist, ...) This is a very important text, because it is the only one that clearly equates the Antichrist with Satan[212]. In this respect we have to note, however, that Firmicus Maternus' theological education was very limited[213].

Cyril of Jerusalem

The most famous work of Cyril of Jerusalem (313-386) consists of the *Λόγοι κατηχητικοί*, which date from 348[214]. In one passage he states that many antichrists are about to appear. Contrary to Christ, they will not come from heaven[215]: πολλοὶ μέλλουσιν

[208] OPELT, *o.c.* (n. 168), p. 98, credits Lucifer of Calaris with the invention of the combination "praecursor antichristi", but Athanasius offers the same combination (scil. πρόδομος τοῦ 'Αντιχρίστου). See for the relation between Athanasius and Lucifer TIETZE, *o.c.* (n. 204), pp. 226-227.

[209] R. TURCAN, *Firmicus Maternus. L'erreur des religions païennes* (Collection des Universités de France ... Budé), Paris 1982, pp. 10-12; for further information, see ID., pp. 7-28.

[210] TURCAN, *o.c.* (n. 209), pp. 24-27.

[211] *De errore profanarum religionum* XXII.4 (text according to TURCAN, *o.c.* (n. 209)). The translation "anointed ones" (for "christos") fits in better with the context.

[212] Here BOUSSET, *o.c.* (n. 127), p. 89, is right. ("Bei Firmicus Maternus finden wir aber ganz deutlich die Identifikation ...").

[213] TURCAN, *o.c.* (n. 209), pp. 22, 43-44. (Neither is his pagan (astrological) work a model of erudition: p. 21.)

[214] G. RÖWEKAMP, *Cyrill von Jerusalem*, in: DÖPP – GEERLINGS, *o.c.* (n. 165), pp. 152-153 (p. 152).

[215] *Λόγοι κατηχητικοί* IV.15 (text according to G.C. REISCHL – J. RUPP, *Cyrilli Hierosolymorum archiepiscopi opera quae supersunt omnia*, Monaci 1848-1860).

ἀντίχριστοι νῦν ἀπὸ γῆς ἔρχεσθαι (Many antichrists are to come at this time from the earth.)

In the fifteenth homily, Cyril speaks much more elaborately about the Antichrist as a once-and-for-all eschatological figure. With reference to II Thess. 2.9, the special relationship of the Antichrist with Satan is described as follows[216]: ὁ σατανᾶς ὀργάνῳ κέχρηται ἐκείνῳ, αὐτοπροσώπως δι' αὐτοῦ ἐνεργῶν (Satan uses him as an instrument, working in his own person through him.) The first part seems to indicate that there is a clear distance between the Antichrist and Satan; the second part seems close to identification. Also what follows in this paragraph leans toward identification[217]: δι' ἑαυτοῦ λοιπὸν πολεμεῖ φανερώτερον (Henceforth he wages war by himself more openly.) Satan throws himself into the conflict. This thought is repeated further in the text[218]: οἱ μὲν γὰρ πρὸ τούτου μόνοις ἀνθρώποις ἐπάλαισαν, οἱ δὲ ἐπὶ τοῦ Ἀντιχρίστου αὐτῷ τῷ σατανᾷ αὐτοπροσώπως πολεμήσουσιν (The [martyrs] who (have lived) until now, have wrestled with men only, but the [martyrs] who (will live) during the time of the Antichrist will battle with Satan in his own person.) Yet Telfer sees no identification here, not even incarnation, at least no incarnation from birth. He rather sees the Antichrist as a man who is possessed, not by some demon, but by Satan himself[219]. This is confirmed by another passage in which Satan and the Antichrist appear as two separate personages in one sentence[220]: ὁ ἀντικείμενος [= ὁ διάβολος]... ἄγει τινὰ ἄνθρωπον [= ὁ προειρημένος Ἀντίχριστος[221]] (The adversary [= the devil] incites a man [= the aforementioned

[216] *Λόγοι κατηχητικοί* XV.14.

[217] *Λόγοι κατηχητικοί* XV.14.

[218] *Λόγοι κατηχητικοί* XV.17.

[219] W. TELFER, *Cyril of Jerusalem and Nemesius of Emesa* (Library of Christian Classics 4), London 1955, p. 158 n. 66, p. 161 n. 84. Telfer states (n. 66) that Hippolytus of Rome did mean such an incarnation; see above for a discussion of Hippolytus and for an overview of the different possibilities mentioned with regards to the relationship between Satan and Antichrist.

[220] *Λόγοι κατηχητικοί* XV.11. VAN DER WESTHUIZEN, *o.c.* (n. 49), p. 6, notices from this passage that the devil looks for a parody on Christ. From this follows that the Antichrist cannot be identified with the devil.

[221] These words are in *Λόγοι κατηχητικοί* XV.12 (beginning); the identifications of ὁ ἀντικείμενος and τινὰ ἄνθρωπον may seem arbitrary, but within the whole of XV.11 and 12 this is certainly not problematic.

Antichrist]). To Cyril, therefore, the Antichrist is a man in whom Satan is working fully.

In this passage Cyril also discusses the characteristics of the Antichrist[222]: σωφροσύνην τε καὶ φιλανθρωπίαν ὑποκρίνεται, σημείοις δὲ καὶ τέρασι τοῖς ἐκ μαγικῆς ἀπάτης ψευδέσιν Ἰουδαίους ὡσανεὶ Χριστὸς ὁ προσδοκώμενος ἀπατήσας, παντοίοις ὕστερον ἀπανθρωπίας καὶ παρανομίας ἐπιγραφήσεται κακοῖς, ὡς πάντας ὑπερβαλέσθαι τοὺς πρὸ αὐτοῦ γενομένους ἀδίκους καὶ ἀσεβεῖς, φονικὴν καὶ ἀποτομωτάτην καὶ ἀνηλεῆ καὶ ποικίλην κατὰ πάντων μέν, ἐξαιρέτως δὲ καθ' ἡμῶν τῶν χριστιανῶν τὴν διάνοιαν ἔχων (He feigns soberness and benevolence, and with signs and wonders and deceit through magical guile, he beguiles the Jews as though he were the expected Messiah. Also, he will choose for all kinds of ailments of hatred towards people and transgressions of the law, so that he will outdo all the lawless and godless who have come before him, with a murderous, most cruel, merciless and unreliable attitude towards all, but especially towards us Christians.) From this we can infer quite a lot. The Antichrist deceives others by feigning to be different from whom he really is and by all kinds of miraculous signs. He can perform these deceptive signs because of magical powers, i.e. with supernatural or rather with satanic help[223]. As he feigns to be the Messiah, he apparently seeks to obtain religious authority. He will be a hater of God and men, without law or justice. He will act as a dictator: absolute, ruthless and capricious, towards all but especially towards the Christians. This indicates a political role again.

Jerome

Sophronius Eusebius Hieronymus (347-419)[224] has left behind an extensive collection of letters, including many letters to women.

[222] *Λόγοι κατηχητικοί* XV.12.

[223] TELFER, *o.c.* (n. 219), p. 156 n. 53.

[224] M. TESTARD, *Saint Jérôme. L'apôtre savant et pauvre du patriciat romain*, Paris 1969, pp. 11, 85; for further information, see ID., *o.c.*

It is remarkable that the four "greatest" (Jerome, John Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Augustine) are born in a period of only eight years (347-354). Regrettably, this does not mean that they could all cooperate well; for the (poor) relation between Jerome and Augustine, see e.g. Marie MCNAMARA, *Friendship in Saint Augustine* (Studia Friburgensia NS 20), Fribourg 1958, pp. 178-186. (See, however, also J.N.D. KELLY, *Jerome. His Life, Writings, and Controversies*,

To the noble and intelligent Gallic lady Algasia (probably living in Bordeaux), he writes a letter in the first half of 407[225]. It speaks about the Antichrist, in response to her question about Paul's second Epistle to the Thessalonians (esp. II Thess. 2.3-4, 8-9). According to Jerome, the Antichrist is clearly an eschatological figure[226]: "apostolus ... exponit, quae ante aduentum antichristi debeant praestolari, ut, cum illa facta uiderint, tunc sciant antichristum, id est hominem peccati et filium perditionis ... esse uenturum." (The apostle ... explains what has to be expected before the Antichrist comes, so that, when one has seen those things, one will know that the Antichrist, i.e. the man of sin and the son of destruction, is about to come.) This first identification can be combined with a second identification[227]: "'filius perditionis' - id est diaboli" ("the son of destruction", i.e. of the devil). Thus the Antichrist seems to be the son of the devil[228].

London 1975, pp. 337-339, who defends another year of birth (331); this would shed another light on the relation between Jerome and Augustine (about which see also his pp. 217-220), but his thesis has not been accepted: see S. REBENICH, *Hieronymus und sein Kreis. Prosopographische und sozialgeschichtliche Untersuchungen* (Historia Einzelschriften 72), Stuttgart 1992, p. 21). On the other hand, John Chrysostom and Theodore of Mopsuestia were actually friends (cf. B.E. CARTER, *Chrysostom's Ad Theodorum lapsum*, in *Vigiliae Christianae* 16 (1962), pp. 87-101).

[225] Concerning friendship with women in Jerome's life in general, see Elizabeth A. CLARK, *Jerome, Chrysostom, and Friends. Essays and Translations* (Studies in Women and Religion 1), New York 1979, and P. LAURENCE, *Jérôme et le nouveau modèle féminin. La conversion à la "vie parfaite"* (Collection des Études Augustiniennes 155), Paris 1997; for Algasia in particular, see ID., *o.c.*, pp. 8, 325, 417 (cf. p. 401), and REBENICH, *o.c.* (n. 224), pp. 276-277 (cf. p. 209).

[226] *Ad Algasiam liber quaestionum undecim (Epistula CXXI)* 11.8 (text according to I. HILBERG, *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi epistulae* (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 56), Vindobonae – Lipsiae 1918).

[227] *Ad Algasiam* 11.9.

[228] H.D. RAUH, *Das Bild des Antichrist im Mittelalter: von Tyconius zum Deutschen Symbolismus* (Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Theologie des Mittelalters NF 9), Münster 1979², p. 132, wrongly quotes *In Thessalonicenses* (II.2.3) 872C (J.P. MIGNE, *S. Eusebii Hieronymi Stridonensis presbyteri opera omnia* (Patrologia Latina 30), Parisiis 1846) ("[diabolus] eum quasi sibi natum servitio possidebit"). This work is not authentic: see the admonition in MIGNE, *o.c.*, coll. 643-646; E. DEKKERS, *Clavis Patrum Latinorum* (Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina), [Turnholti] – Steenbrugis 1995³, does not even mention it under Jerome's name (but see his no. 759).

According to this letter of Jerome, the Antichrist's actions are mainly religious[229]: "'extollitur super omne, quod dicitur deus', ut cunctarum gentium deos siue omnem probatam et ueram religionem suo calcet pede et 'in templo Dei' – uel Hierosolymis, ut quidam putant, uel in ecclesia, ut uerius arbitramur – sederit 'ostendens se, tamquam' ipse 'sit' Christus et filius Dei." ("He raises himself above all that is called god", that he will trample with his foot the gods of the collective nations or every worthy and true religion. He will take a seat "in God's Temple", either in Jerusalem, as some think, or in the church, as we consider to be more probable, "presenting himself as if" he himself "is" the Christ and God's Son.) More is said about the nature of the Antichrist later in the answer[230]: "cuius opera satanae sunt opera, et, sicut in Christo plenitudo diuinitatis fuit corporaliter, ita et in antichristo omnes erunt fortitudines et signa atque prodigia, sed uniuersa mendacia." (And his works are the works of Satan, and as the fullness of the godhead bodily dwelled in Christ, all powers and signs and wonders will also be present in the Antichrist, but (it is) all deceit.) He does the works of Satan (and is therefore not identical with him), and performs false miraculous signs. Here is also made a comparison with Paul's statements about Christ's divinity in his Epistle to the Colossians (Col. 2.9).

The same idea is found in Jerome's *Commentary on the book of Daniel*[231]: "ne eum putemus, iuxta quorundam opinionem, uel diabolum esse uel daemonem, sed unum de hominibus in quo totus satanas habitaturus est corporaliter." (So that we would not think that he, according to the opinion of some, would be the devil or an evil spirit, but one from men, in whom the whole Satan will dwell bodily.) This immediately makes clear what Jerome thinks is the nature of the Antichrist.

A very elaborate description of the Antichrist can be found in Jerome's exegesis of Dan. 11.21-45. In contrast to most other exegetes, he sees a description of the Antichrist in the whole passage. This is probably motivated mainly by his opposition to Porphyry, who saw Antiochus IV Epiphanes everywhere and did

[229] *Ad Algasiam* 11.9. The quoted phrases are from II Thess. 2.4.

[230] *Ad Algasiam* 11.14.

[231] *In Danielem* (7.7c-8) II 601-604. This commentary dates from 407 (GLORIE, *o.c.* (n. 12), p. 751). Even after fifteen centuries it is still legible, although RAUH, *o.c.* (n. 228), p. 130 and passim, judges it rather negatively.

not ascribe any role to the Antichrist. However, Jerome is not entirely consistent: he also describes the exegesis with which he does not agree (leading to Antiochus IV). Of course this in itself is not a problem, but more than once he strongly gives the impression that he loses himself in this exegesis, as if it reflects his own opinion[232]. The Antichrist is viewed as future in this passage[233]: "qui ultimo tempore futurus est" (who will be there in the last time). He will be born[234] – typically human – namely from the Jewish nation ("nasciturus est de populo Iudaeorum"[235]). He also mentions the possibility – but without concurring[236]– that Nero is the Antichrist[237]: "multi nostrorum putant, ob saeuitiae et turpitudinis magnitudinem, Domitianum uel Neronem Antichristum fore." (Many of us are of the opinion, because of the size of his

[232] Both RAUH, *o.c.* (n. 228), p. 135 ("Antiochus Epiphanes, den als Typus des Antichrist zu nominieren Hieronymus nicht müde wird, ..."), and W.H. SHEA, *Early Development of the Antiochus Epiphanes Interpretation*, in: F.B. HOLBROOK (Ed.), *Symposium on Daniel. Introductory and Exegetical Studies* (Daniel and Revelation Committee Series 2), Washington 1986, pp. 256-328 (pp. 295-296: "At verse 21 Jerome parted company with Porphyry. In this verse he saw the future Antichrist introduced and continuing to the end of the chapter") oversimplified. Of the two mentioned authors SHEA, *o.c.*, p. 321 n. 83, was the more subtle: "Actually, Jerome's interpretation ... was a bit more complex". Indeed, *De Antichristo in Danielem* [IV] takes up varying viewpoints: "nostri autem haec omnia de Antichristo prophetari arbitrantur" (11.21, ll. 10-11; cf. ll. 73-74 and 11.25-26, ll. 99-101); "haec autem sub Antiocho Epiphane in imaginem praecesserunt: ut rex sceleratissimus qui persecutus est populum Dei, praefiguret Antichristum qui Christi populum persecuturus est" (11.28b-30a, ll. 147-150; cf. 11.30b, l. 161); "Quod quidem et nos de Antichristo intellegimus" (11.36, ll. 252-253); "hoc magis Antichristo quam Antiocho conuenit" (11.37-39, ll. 308-309); "Nostri autem, ad Antichristum et ista referentes, ..." (11.40-41a, ll. 347-348). We see that he swings from "only Antichrist", via "Antiochus IV as a type of the Antichrist", to "only Antichrist", on to "Antiochus IV not excluded, but rather Antichrist" and back to "only Antichrist".

[233] *De Antichristo in Danielem* (11.21) [IV] 11-12.

[234] Albeit not through virgin birth: see *Ad Algasiam* 11.16: "et siquidem ["if at least"] antichristus de uirgine natus esset [irrealis] ..."

[235] *De Antichristo in Danielem* (11.25-26) [IV] 101. From the fact itself one cannot conclude anti-Jewish polemic with Jerome, even though the quote "quia perditioni sunt praeparati" comes close, but RAUH, *o.c.* (n. 228), p. 133, forgets to mention where he has found these words. Please note: the commentary on II Thess., quoted by RAUH, *o.c.*, p. 132 n. 15 and p. 133 n. 17, is not Jerome's: see above, n. 228.

[236] This is overlooked by RAUH, *o.c.* (n. 228), pp. 135-136.

[237] *De Antichristo in Danielem* (11.28b-30a) [IV] 151-154 (v. app. crit.).

anger and disgrace, that Domitian or Nero will be the Antichrist.) Although his last acts of war are discussed exhaustively[238], we do not learn much about the character of his actions. It becomes clear, however, that he makes use of deceit[239]: "et per insidias et fraudulentiam obtineat principatum". (Through ambushes and deceit he obtains dominion.) In any case, in this writing of Jerome the Antichrist's character is mainly military-political[240], but also religious, as in the *Epistle to Algasia*[241].

As we have seen, Jerome writes quite extensively about the Antichrist. His view can be summarised as follows: The Antichrist is an eschatological figure, even though his name is also used to condemn actual practices or attitudes[242]. He is human, but stands in close relation to Satan. Whether his actions are mainly religious or political is unclear. Apparently his actions are a combination of the two[243], whereby the politico-military aspect is stressed in his *Commentary on Daniel*[244], and the religious aspect is stressed in the *Epistle to Algasia*. Jerome's statements about the Antichrist are always closely linked to his exegesis.

John Chrysostom

In a homily on Paul's second Epistle to the Thessalonians (dating from his Constantinopolitan period, 398-403[245]), Chrysostom (349-407)[246] is perfectly clear about the human character of the

[238] Mainly *De Antichristo in Danielem* (11.40-45) [IV] 328-477.

[239] *De Antichristo in Danielem* (11.21) [IV] 77-78.

[240] Cf. *De Antichristo in Danielem* (11.21) [IV] 82-83: "nullus enim Iudaeorum absque Antichristo in toto umquam orbe regnauit".

[241] Cf. *De Antichristo in Danielem* (11.31) [IV] 177-178 (actually a quote from II Thess. 2.4).

[242] RAUH, *o.c.* (n. 228), p. 136. See e.g. *Ad Furiam de uiduitate seruanda (Epistula LIV)* 7.2: "ornatus iste non domini est; velamen istud antichristi est" (text according to I. HILBERG, *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi epistulae* (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 54), Vindobonae – Lipsiae 1910).

[243] RAUH, *o.c.* (n. 228), p. 136: "Die Personalunion von Rex Tyrannus und Pseudo-Prophet ist ein Erbe der Apokalyptik; als Gegenbild zu Christus, dem 'Rex et Sacerdos', entspricht sie der biblischen Auffassung".

[244] RAUH, *o.c.* (n. 228), p. 136.

[245] R. KACZYNSKI, *Johannes Chrysostomus*, in: DÖPP – GEERLINGS, *o.c.* (n. 165), pp. 336-343 (pp. 337-340).

[246] KACZYNSKI, *o.c.* (n. 245), pp. 337-338; for further information, see J.N.D. KELLY, *Golden Mouth. The story of John Chrysostom – ascetic, preacher, bishop*, London 1995 (for the year of his birth, see pp. 4, 296-298).

Antichrist[247]: Τίς δὲ οὗτός ἐστιν; ἆρα ὁ Σατανᾶς; Οὐδαμῶς· ἀλλ' ἄνθρωπός τις πᾶσαν αὐτοῦ δεχόμενος τὴν ἐνέργειαν· ἄνθρωπος γάρ ἐστι. (Who then is this? Satan perhaps? No, but a man who has taken over all of his activity. For he is a man.) The religious aspect is made explicit[248]: καὶ κελεύσει προσκυνεῖν αὐτὸν ἀντὶ τοῦ θεοῦ (And he will order to worship him instead of God.) Again we find the combination of religious and political power[249]: τὴν τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπιχειρήσει ἁρπάσαι ἀρχήν. (He will use force to seize the power of men and of God.) We find the same combination in a homily on John (dating from the Antiochian period, so before 398[250])[251]: τυραννικῶς τὰ μηδὲν αὐτῷ προσήκοντα ἁρπάζων, καὶ τὸν ἐπὶ πάντων θεὸν εἶναι λέγων (in a tyrannical way seizing what in no way belongs to him, and saying that he is the god of everything). This eschatological figure will act deceitfully[252]: οὐδὲν ἀληθὲς, ἀλλὰ πρὸς ἀπάτην (nothing in truth, but (everything) with deceit).

Theodore of Mopsuestia

The commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia (352-428)[253] on Paul's second Epistle to the Thessalonians is mainly preserved in its Latin translation. Theodore too regards the Antichrist as a human eschatological figure[254]: "homo erit, daemone in eo omnia inope-

[247] *In epistulam II ad Thessalonicenses homilia III* 525C (text according to F. F[IELD], *Joannis Chrysostomi archiepiscopi Constantinopolitani interpretatio omnium epistolarum Paulinarum per homilias facta V. Continens homilias in epistolas ad Philippenses, Colossenses et Thessalonicenses*, Oxonii – Londini 1855).

[248] *In epistulam II ad Thessalonicenses homilia III* 525C.

[249] *In epistulam II ad Thessalonicenses homilia III* 530A.

[250] KACZYNSKI, *o.c.* (n. 245), pp. 337, 339.

[251] *In Joannem XLI* 236 (text according to J.P. MIGNE, *S. Joannes Chrysostomus* (Patrologia Graeca 59), Parisiis 1862).

[252] *In epistulam II ad Thessalonicenses homilia III* 530C. We find the same thought in *Ad eos qui scandalizati sunt* XII 1 (in a series of "why?" questions; text according to Anne-Marie MALINGREY, *Jean Chrysostome. Sur la providence de Dieu* (Sources Chrétiennes 79), Paris 1961): τίνος ἕνεκεν ὁ Ἀντίχριστος παραγίνεται, ὁ τοσαύτην ἔχων δύναμιν πρὸς ἀπάτην (with a further reference to Mt. 24.24) (For which reason does the Antichrist appear, who has such a power for deceit?).

[253] P. BRUNS, *Theodor von Mopsuestia*, in: DÖPP – GEERLINGS, *o.c.* (n. 165), pp. 592-594 (p. 592); CARTER, *o.c.* (n. 224), pp. 87, 99-100.

[254] *In epistulam ad Thessalonicenses II* (2.3-4) p. 50 l. 9 – p. 51 l. 1; (2.8) p. 56 ll. 1-2 (text according to H.B. SWETE, *Theodori episcopi Mopsuesteni in epistolas*

rante". (He will be a man, while an evil spirit in him will work everything.) "... euidens est quoniam de homine id dicit; nec enim Satanan expedit, ..." (It is evident that he says this about a man, as it does not match Satan.) He really wants to come ἀντὶ Χριστοῦ[255]: "temptat enim ille per omnia illa, quae Christi sunt, imitari, utpote et Christum se esse dicens". (For he tries in all those things that are Christ's, to imitate (Him), for he says that he even is the Christ.) "... quasi quia ipse sit Christus et propter hoc debeat ab omnibus adorari in ordinem Dei" (as if he himself is the Christ, and for this reason has to be worshipped as God by all), πάντας ἀνθρώπους ἀφιστῶντος τῆς εὐσεβείας (making all people depart from godliness).

Augustine of Hippo

Most elements of the ideas of Augustine (354-430)[256] on the Antichrist can be found in *De civitate Dei*. He started this work under the influence of Alaric's capture of Rome in 410, although he did not want to attach too much importance to that[257]. Also in the *Tractatus in Epistolam Joannis ad Parthos*, dating from 415[258], some data can be found grouped together. The Antichrist is clearly an eschatological figure[259]: "certe prius veniet Antichristus, et tunc veniet dies judicii". (Certainly the Antichrist will first come, and then will come the day of judgment.) Actually we already live in the end times, he states with I Jn. 2.18[260]: "ne ... non esse horam novissimam putarent, quod venturus esset Antichristus, ait illis: *Et sicut audistis quod Antichristus sit venturus, nunc antichristi multi*

B. Pauli commentarii. The Latin Version with the Greek Fragments II. I. Thessalonians – Philemon. Appendices. Indices, Cambridge 1882).

[255] *In epistulam ad Thessalonicenses II* (2.3-4) p. 51 ll. 2-4, p. 52 ll. 1-3; (2.8) p. 56 l. 13.

[256] To be precise: Aurelius Augustinus Hipponensis lived from Sunday 13 November 354 until Thursday 28 August 430 (A. SIZOO, *Augustinus. Leven en werken*, Kampen 1957, pp. 21, 327). For further information, see SIZOO, *o.c.*, or G. BONNER, *St Augustine of Hippo. Life and Controversies*, London 1963.

[257] ALTANER – STUIBER, *o.c.* (n. 162), p. 424; RAUH, *o.c.* (n. 228), pp. 25, 128.

[258] P. AGAËSSE, *Saint Augustin. Commentaire de la première épître de S. Jean* (Sources Chrétiennes 75), Paris 1961, pp. 9-12.

[259] *Tractatus in Epistolam Joannis ad Parthos* III 3 (text according to AGAËSSE, *o.c.* (n. 258)).

[260] *Tractatus in Epistolam Joannis ad Parthos* III 3.

facti sunt." (Lest people would think that it is not (yet) the last hour, in which the Antichrist will come, he says to them: "And as you have heard that the Antichrist will come, now many antichrists have arisen.") He gives the following definition of the kind of antichrist that already exists in the present[261]: "quisquis factis negat Christum, antichristus est". (Whoever denies the Christ with his deeds, is an antichrist.) In *De civitate Dei* it is clear that Augustine stresses the eschatological character[262]. The Antichrist is a rebel against God ("refugam ... a Domino Deo"[263]) and Satan works powerfully but deceitfully through him ("per illum Antichristum [satanas] in omni sua virtute mirabiliter quidem, sed mendaciter operabitur". (Through the Antichrist [Satan] in all his power will be working in miraculous though deceitful ways.[264]) So the Antichrist and Satan are different beings[265], but the Antichrist can be regarded as identical to the false prophet in Rev. 19.20[266]: "pseudopropheta uero eius ... Antichristus est". (His false prophet is actually the Antichrist.) Also with Augustine both the religious and the political character are present: the Antichrist will sit in the Temple[267], but will also reign powerfully[268]. Although one might

[261] *Tractatus in Epistolam Joannis ad Parthos* III 8.

[262] Incl. XVIII.53.1-2, XX.13.1, XX.19.26-29 (on II Thess. 2.1 sqq.).

[263] *De civitate Dei* XX.19.28-29 (text according to B. DOMBART – A. KALB, *Sancti Aurelii Augustini de civitate Dei libri XI-XXII* (Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina 48), Turnholti 1955); Augustine identifies the Antichrist with the "discessio" in II Thess. 2.3b (but he uses "refuga").

[264] *De civitate Dei* XX.19.98-100. (The quotation from this passage by RAUH, *o.c.* (n. 228), p. 129, is careless.) For "deceitful", compare "tertia [persecutio ecclesiae] superest per antichristum ventura, ... fraudulenta erit", and "habebit... dolum in miraculis" (*Enarrationes in Psalmos* IX.27.9-11; text according to E. DEKKERS – I. FRAIPONT, *Sancti Aurelii Augustini enarrationes in Psalmos I-L* (Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina 38), Turnholti 1956) and "In Antichristo iniustitia est, et uerax non est" (*Tractatus in Iohannem* XXIX.8.29-30; text according to R. WILLEMS, *Sancti Aurelii Augustini in Iohannis evangelium tractatus CXXIV* (Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina 36), Turnholti 1954).

[265] One could think of an identification as the result of an unclear note with Job 18.6 (*Adnotationes in Iob* XVIII: "aut diabolus aut antichristus"; text according to I. ZYCHA, *Sancti Aureli Augustini quaestionum in heptateuchum libri VII, adnotationum in Iob liber unus* (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 28), Pragae – Vindobonae – Lipsiae 1895).

[266] *De civitate Dei* XX.14.7-8.

[267] See *De civitate Dei* XX.19.30-33.

[268] "Vim habebit in imperio" (*Enarrationes in Psalmos* IX.27.11).

have expected that this great theologian would have worked out his thinking on the Antichrist more concretely, this is not the case[269].

Theodoret of Cyrrhus

Theodoret (393-466)[270] gives his view on the Antichrist in his commentary on the Pauline Epistles[271]: Ἀποστῆσαι γὰρ ἅπαντας τῆς ἀληθείας πειρᾶται. "Ἄνθρωπον" δὲ αὐτὸν "ἁμαρτίας" προσηγόρευσεν, ἐπειδὴ ἄνθρωπός ἐστι τὴν φύσιν, πᾶσαν ἐν ἑαυτῷ τοῦ διαβόλου δεχόμενς τὴν ἐνέργειαν. (For he tries to make everybody depart from the truth. For he called him "Man of lawlessness", because he is by nature a man, who accepts into himself the activity of the devil.) It is very clear that in Theodoret's mind the Antichrist is one man, coming at the end of times, in whom Satan will be working fully.

Andrew of Caesarea

Some time between 563 and 614, Andrew, archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, wrote a commentary on the book of Revelation[272]. He too speaks about ὁ ἐν τῷ ἀντιχρίστῳ ἐνεργῶν διάβολος (the devil working in the Antichrist)[273]. From the full context it appears that Andrew of Caesarea assumes a once-and-for-all Antichrist. The believers will flee from him to desolate places[274], but it is unclear whether they will do this in order to avoid mental or physical violence, although ἀποστασία[275] rather points to the former.

[269] Cf. RAUH, *o.c.* (n. 228), p. 127.

[270] P. BRUNS, *Theodoret von Cyrus*, in: DÖPP – GEERLINGS, *o.c.* (n. 165), pp. 596-598 (p. 596).

[271] *Interpretatio in quatuordecim epistolas S. Pauli* 664A-B (text according to J.L. SCHULZE, *Theodoreti Cyrensis episcopi opera omnia* (Patrologia Graeca 82), Parisiis 1864).

[272] ALTANER – STUIBER, *o.c.* (n. 162), p. 517; J. SCHMID, *Studien zur Geschichte des griechischen Apokalypse-Textes I. Der Apokalypse-Kommentar des Andreas von Kaisareia. Text* (Münchener Theologische Studien. Ergänzungsband), München 1955, p. 177 (about ll. 16-17, a comment on Apoc. 16.19).

[273] *Apokalypse-Kommentar* (12.6) p. 127 l. 12 (text according to SCHMID, *o.c.* (n. 272)).

[274] *Apokalypse-Kommentar* (12.6) p. 127 l. 12 – p. 128 l. 5.

[275] *Apokalypse-Kommentar* (12.6) p. 128 l. 5.

John of Damascus

John of Damascus (about 650-750) might be considered as the last common teacher of East and West and as such as representing the endpoint of the Greek Fathers; therefore, I will conclude this overview with him. His main work is the *Πηγὴ γνώσεως* (published in 743 or slightly later)[276]. The third and largest part of it is called *ἔκθεσις τῆς ὀρθοδόξου πίστεως*, or in Latin *De fide orthodoxa*, or sometimes *Expositio fidei.*

In the penultimate chapter of his *Expositio fidei*, John of Damascus writes about the Antichrist. After the Antichrist had for a while been viewed as purely eschatological, John of Damascus once again gives a definition which allows for many simultaneous antichrists. It appears that the christological discussion was still raging in his time[277]: Πᾶς μὲν οὖν ὁ μὴ ὁμολογῶν τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ θεὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθέναι καὶ εἶναι θεὸν τέλειον καὶ γενέσθαι ἄνθρωπον τέλειον μετὰ τοῦ μεῖναι θεὸν ἀντίχριστός ἐστιν. (Whosoever does not recognise that the Son of God and that God came in the flesh and that He was genuinely God and that He has become genuinely man while also remaining God, is an antichrist.) Yet he expects that at the end of times an Antichrist par excellence will come as well[278]: Ὅμως ἰδιοτρόπως καὶ ἐξαιρέτως ἀντίχριστος λέγεται ὁ ἐπὶ τῇ συντελείᾳ τοῦ αἰῶνος ἐρχόμενος. (And in the same way and par excellence the person who will come at the end of times will be called Antichrist.) John considers himself as better than the Jews and assumes that only they will follow the Antichrist[279]: Οἱ οὖν Ἰουδαῖοι υἱὸν θεοῦ ὄντα τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν

[276] R. VOLK, *Johannes von Damaskus*, in: DÖPP – GEERLINGS, *o.c.* (n. 165), pp. 344-347 (pp. 344-346); J. NASRALLAH, *Saint-Jean de Damas. Son époque – sa vie – son œuvre* (Les souvenirs chrétiens de Damas 2), Harissa 1950, pp. 58-59, 127-128; for further information, see ID., *o.c.*

[277] *Expositio fidei* 99.2-4 (text according to B. KOTTER, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos II. Expositio fidei* (Patristische Texten und Studien 12), Berlin – New York 1973).

[278] *Expositio fidei* 99.5-6.

[279] *Expositio fidei* 99.14-15. Please note: this is not the permanent lot of the Jews: Enoch and Elijah will lead them to the Gospel, and thus they will be saved: Ἀποσταλήσεται δὲ Ἐνὼχ καὶ Ἠλίας ὁ Θεσβίτης καὶ ἐπιστρέψουσι καρδίας πατέρων ἐπὶ τέκνα, τουτέστι τὴν συναγωγὴν ἐπὶ τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν καὶ τὸ τῶν ἀποστόλων κήρυγμα, καὶ ὑπ' αὐτοῦ ἀναιρεθήσονται (*Expositio fidei* 99.44-47). Apparently ἀναιρεῖν should be interpreted in a positive sense here; the use of the same verb two lines further down (l. 49: ἀνελεῖ; see BLASS – DEBRUNNER – REHKOPF, *o.c.* (n. 50), § 74 n. 8) in a negative sense may speak against this.

Χριστὸν καὶ θεὸν οὐκ ἐδέξαντο, τὸν δὲ πλάνον θεὸν ἑαυτὸν λέγοντα δέξονται. (The Jews then have not accepted the Lord Jesus Christ, who was the Son of God and also (Himself) God, but they will accept the deceiver who will call himself god.) This already shows the mainly religious character of the Antichrist as John of Damascus sees him. As regards the sameness in essence with Satan, John of Damascus stays in line with the later Church Fathers[280]: Οὐκ αὐτὸς τοίνυν ὁ διάβολος γίνεται ἄνθρωπος κατὰ τὴν τοῦ κυρίου ἐνανθρώπησιν - μὴ γένοιτο -, ἀλλ' ἄνθρωπος ἐκ πορνείας τίκτεται καὶ ὑποδέχεται πᾶσαν τὴν ἐνέργειαν τοῦ σατανᾶ. (Now the devil does not just become a man himself as with the Lord's incarnation – May it never come to pass! – but a man will be born out of adultery and takes over all the activity of Satan.)

CONCLUSION

Synthesis

After having studied the biblical passages as well as the most explicit data of the Fathers, we can say that in general the Fathers have systematized, but by doing this they have not really departed from the biblical basis as far as the main points are concerned. This does not mean that the Fathers did agree in their answers to all the questions that concern us here. I would like to suggest the following synthesis.

The data for the Apostolic Fathers are too scanty to make up a separate overview for the first period: Polycarp is the only one who used the word Ἀντίχριστος and he was unclear in his explanation.

Later, the Antichrist was almost always presented as a once-and-for-all, eschatological figure who has a close relationship with Satan, the two, however, not being identical. Firmicus Maternus is the only one who clearly speaks about such an identity, but he does not elaborate on this. Victorinus of Pettau is unclear. Methodically speaking it is slightly dubious to conclude from this that a separate tradition existed which saw the Antichrist as identical with Satan[281].

[280] *Expositio fidei* 99.31-33.

[281] Against BOUSSET, *o.c.* (n. 127), pp. 88-91.

The Antichrist is nearly always portrayed as a man, albeit a man who is completely possessed, not by some demon, but by Satan himself.

The writers who discuss antichrists in plural, usually regard them as forerunners of the eschatological Antichrist. Athanasius speaks about the many antichrists only, but this can be explained by the subject of his writings[282]. Origen stands alone in considering the Antichrist mainly as a principle, but he supports also the coming of an eschatological Antichrist.

In my last conclusion I want to discern three different currents (with some chronological sequence). In a first current (e.g. Irenaeus, Tertullian and Hippolytus), the Church Fathers situated the Antichrist's actions mainly in the area of politics. Here his characteristics were injustice, lawlessness, lack of respect for human lives, tyrannical behaviour, guile, deceit. In a second current (e.g. Cyril of Jerusalem, Jerome, Chrysostom and Augustine) there was a combination: the Antichrist's actions were described as both political and religious. Political characteristics were then (political) deceit, lawlessness, injustice, lack of respect for human lives, tyrannical behaviour. Religious characteristics were (religious) deceit, rebellion against God and all religion, presenting himself as god. In a last current (e.g. Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrrhus, Andrew of Caesarea and John of Damascus) the religious field of action dominated again, and the Antichrist's characteristics were presenting himself as god, and attempting to lead others into apostasy.

Definition

Of course the New Testament would have been easier to accept as a basis for a definition of the "Antichrist", but this turned out to be insufficiently defined in the New Testament writings. We therefore do not "presuppose" that there is an Antichrist[283], but we have to notice that the word "Antichrist" is used and that a first valid definition is that of the most ancient common Christian (Catholic) texts, i.e. of the Fathers.

[282] Actually it becomes implicitly clear that he does assume that an Antichrist will come at the end of times as well. The same applies to Tertullian, who is also rather polemical.

[283] Cf. ERNST, *o.c.* (n. 123), Regensburg 1967, p. XII.

This does not mean that the Fathers have created something really new. Although it must be admitted that the Fathers have been systematising, the elements of the definition we have found in their writings can also be found in the New Testament (with the book of Daniel as an important background). Therefore, if we are willing not to play the New Testament and the Fathers off against each other, but to find out which direct line can be drawn from the New Testament data to the first processors of those data, we may generally assume one Antichrist concept both in the New Testament and with the Fathers, although this concept has never been fully and systematically defined in one single writing[284].

The Antichrist is a man who will appear at the end of time, wholly filled with Satan. He will be an archdeceiver, as a tyrant (unjust, murderous) and as a false god (turning himself and others away from all existing religion). Other descriptions of the Antichrist are "man of lawlessness", "Beast" and "false prophet" (the latter only for his religious aspect).

[284] This demand has been made by LIETAERT PEERBOLTE, *o.c.* (n. 81), p. 13 (albeit with reference to the third century), but in my view it is going too far. Jenks sees unity thinking in the third century AD (JENKS, *o.c.* (n. 172), pp. 112-114, 357). In this respect it is easier to agree with Jenks than with Lietaert Peerbolte, but there are differences:

1) I have consciously limited my study, in Part III, to texts from mainstream Christianity in which both the theme and the word occur (in contrast to JENKS, *o.c.*, pp. 312-327, 347-250; also in contrast to LIETAERT PEERBOLTE, *o.c.*, pp. 56-61, 194-205).

2) Jenks (pp. 113, 161, 358) is too much impressed by the Combat Myth (although he admits this should actually be screened off from the Antichrist theme: p. 363).

3) Jenks (pp. 25, 161; cf. p. 359) wants to eliminate the Bousset hypothesis (BOUSSET, *o.c.* (n. 127)) because the Antichrist theme is pre-eminently a Christian theme. (LIETAERT PEERBOLTE, *o.c.*, pp. 1, 5-7, too wants to eliminate the hypothesis, but mainly because the large variety of sources would make it impossible.) This seems evident, but the hypothesis must be tested independently, albeit not within the framework of this article. We can however note that in Jenks's definition (pp. 361-362) more space has been given to the relationship with Jesus Christ than in our definition.

In any case, we should avoid both extremes of being so minimalist that we cannot distinguish our theme anywhere as such, and of being so inclusivist that we see forerunners of our theme everywhere.

Summary

This study gives a chronological presentation of the main passages from the Old and the New Testament which have served as a basis for the thinking of the Fathers about the Antichrist, and of the texts of the Fathers which give a description of the nature of the Antichrist.
For the Old Testament Dan. 11.21-45 is treated, and for the New Testament Mt. 24.15-25; II Thess. 2.1-12; I Jn. 2.18-23; 4.3; II Jn. 7; Rev. 13; 19.19-20; 20.10. From these data it is concluded that many elements of the theme are already present, although the image is not systematic.
For the Fathers (Polycarp as well as the Church Fathers until John of Damascus, including Tertullian and Origen), the most explicit texts are given (incl. translation), the relation with the texts of the Old and New Testament is indicated and the nature of the Antichrist as seen by each Father is described. In general, the Antichrist is considered as a once-and-for-all eschatological figure who is completely possessed by Satan himself, deceitful politically as well as religiously. From these texts it is concluded that the Fathers have indeed systematized, but that by doing this they have not departed from the biblical basis, so that one concept both in the New Testament and with the Fathers can be assumed.